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Australian university students and their Japanese host families in short-term homestays: perceptions, intercultural issues and relational dynamics

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Abstract

Study Abroad (SA) is increasingly promoted by Australian universities and undertaken by students. SA places students in direct contact with other cultures, which can be an opportunity for language and culture learning, fostering intercultural friendships and understanding. Among Australian students studying in Japan, a popular option is a short-term program that includes a homestay: two or three weeks staying in the home of a local family. Although considerable literature is available investigating SA for one or two semesters, relatively few studies have examined short-term homestays. Similarly, the literature on Australians on SA programs in Japan is scarce, and does not focus on short-term homestays. However, the length of stay, the accommodation situation, and the particular combination of cultures involved are crucial components that determine students' experiences abroad and affect adjustment and learning. For these reasons, short-term homestay by Australian students in Japan warrants a dedicated study examining this particular SA context.

The present study therefore investigates the specific ways in which being immersed in a new family situation for a short, concentrated period shapes the intercultural experiences of both Australian university students and the Japanese hosts of such students. It is a qualitative exploratory study examining the relational dynamics arising from this quite particular situation, and their effect on communication and expectations both during and after the homestay.

The present project also differs from previous studies of SA in its focus on accounts of the homestay experience rather than on SA outcomes, and in the equal weight it gives to the perceptions of students and host families, rather than privileging student perceptions, in order to provide insights into the different beliefs, assumptions and expectations underlying misunderstandings and/or conflicts.

Qualitative data were collected from three sources. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with nine Australian university students and nine host families (10 host parents) who participated in short-term Japanese homestays in 2009. These data were supplemented by diaries that the students kept about their intercultural experiences during their stay. In addition, the information provided to students and host families by the homestay organisers was examined. Content analysis of all data was undertaken to discover the ways in which

both the students and host families assumed their roles and the expectations they held of each other and of homestay more generally. Three main themes emerged: expectations regarding the roles of family members during the stay, expectations of post-homestay relationships, and expectations of what intercultural learning should consist of. Some differences were evident in these expectations between host families and students, which also varied according to the gender, age and background of the interviewees.

The analysis shows that both the students and their host families expected to form a family unit together, however, their understanding of what constituted being a family member did not necessarily coincide. Both students and host families also juggled multiple roles: as parent or child, language and culture tutor or student, and tour guide or guest. For both groups, trying to fulfil these sometimes conflicting roles generated tensions at times. The intensity of the experience was found to create great difficulties, particularly among beginning-level students.

A clear gap was identified between the perceptions of students and their host families with regard to expectations of any long-term future relationship. Host families indicated that they understood the homestay encounter with a particular student to be significant beyond the homestay period. Consequently, the idea of a post-stay relationship with ongoing communication was often important to host families, an expectation that was absent from the students' accounts. Such mismatched expectations potentially damage an otherwise amicable relationship established during the stay.

Both the students and the host families also brought expectations of intercultural learning to the homestay. Host families assumed tutoring roles to teach their students Japanese culture, sometimes resulting in the creation of a tailored version of everyday Japanese life. The data further reveals that the homestay context became an opportunity for some host families to reflect on "Japaneseness," reinforcing their Japanese identity. Simultaneously, host families demonstrated paradoxical attitudes towards learning about Australian culture.

The thesis thus draws a nuanced picture of the intercultural experiences of Australian students and Japanese host families participating in short-term homestays, and contributes to an understanding of the effects of the particular homestay context on the kinds of roles and relationships readily available to the participants. It demonstrates how this context shapes

expectations, and explores the extent to which these expectations are fulfilled and the effects when they are not fulfilled. The implications of the findings are discussed in terms of appropriate and feasible possibilities for improving SA advising processes. Thus, this thesis lays the groundwork for the investigation and implementation of interventions designed to enhance intercultural experiences for both students and host families.

Declaration by author

This thesis *is composed of my original work, and contains* no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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No publications.

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None.

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Keywords

Homestay, Study abroad, Family dynamics, Japan, Intercultural experiences, Japanese host families, Australian students, Short-term, Identity

Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classifications (ANZSRC)

ANZSRC code: 200209, Multicultural, Intercultural and Cross-cultural Studies, 100 %

Fields of Research (FoR) Classification

FoR code: 2002, Cultural studies, 100 %

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List of Abbreviations used in the thesis

SA Study Abroad

SLA Second Language Acquisition

Use of Japanese scripts

Throughout this thesis, Hepburn Romanization ヘボン式ローマ字 *Hebon-shiki Rōmaji* is used.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introductory statement

Travelling abroad to study gives learners opportunities to foster cross-cultural understanding and intercultural communicative competence. Study abroad in general tends to be construed as beneficial for individual participants in many ways. With numerous possible destinations, however, the linguistic and cultural milieus vary. Furthermore, in addition to traditional study abroad for one or two semesters, shorter duration programs are increasingly popular in recent years. Hence, the nature of the in-country experience that the participants go through and its effects on them cannot be overgeneralised. Students' experiences abroad are all unique with an array of different factors influencing individual intercultural encounters, interactions and perceptions.

The present thesis is concerned with perceptions about intercultural experiences between students from Australian universities and families who host such students in short-term Japanese homestays. It seeks to discover how the particular context of Japanese short-term homestay influences the daily interactions and relational dynamics between the two parties.

Despite the growing research on study abroad and on homestay, previous studies tend to concern measurable outcomes for students after time abroad. In comparison, little attention has been paid to the kind of experiences that the students undergo. In addition, relatively few studies have examined Australians on study abroad programs in Japan, and these do not focus on short-term homestays. A short-term program in Japan, however, is a popular option among learners of Japanese in Australian universities, and worthy of deepening our knowledge as a peculiar context of intercultural experiences. Within such programs, a homestay with a local family is often featured as a program component, which attracts students who believe that the opportunity will accelerate learning of Japanese language and culture. In addition, homestay is more commonly integrated in short-term programs in Japan than in those in other countries. Therefore, given the culturally and contextually specific nature of intercultural communication, short-term homestays by Australian students in Japan warrant an exploratory study that specifically examines their daily experiences with host families.

1.2 Statement of the problem

It is widely believed that the study abroad (SA hereafter) experience benefits participants in language acquisition, cultural understanding and gaining new friendships. There is also an assumption that SA entails immersion in a host culture, which enables participants to become competent in dealing with intercultural communication. As previous studies have shown, however, participants demonstrate dissimilar improvements in language skills, cultural knowledge and attitudes towards the host country and its people after their time abroad. This means the effects of SA and the actual experience of SA cannot simply be generalised to all the participants in the wide range of countries concerned. As Engle and Engle (2003) point out, there is a wide spectrum of vastly different SA program types involving several components (see figure 1). A number of variables, including the destination, language proficiency level at the start of SA, length of stay and opportunities available to integrate into the host community, influence the way the SA experience is shaped.

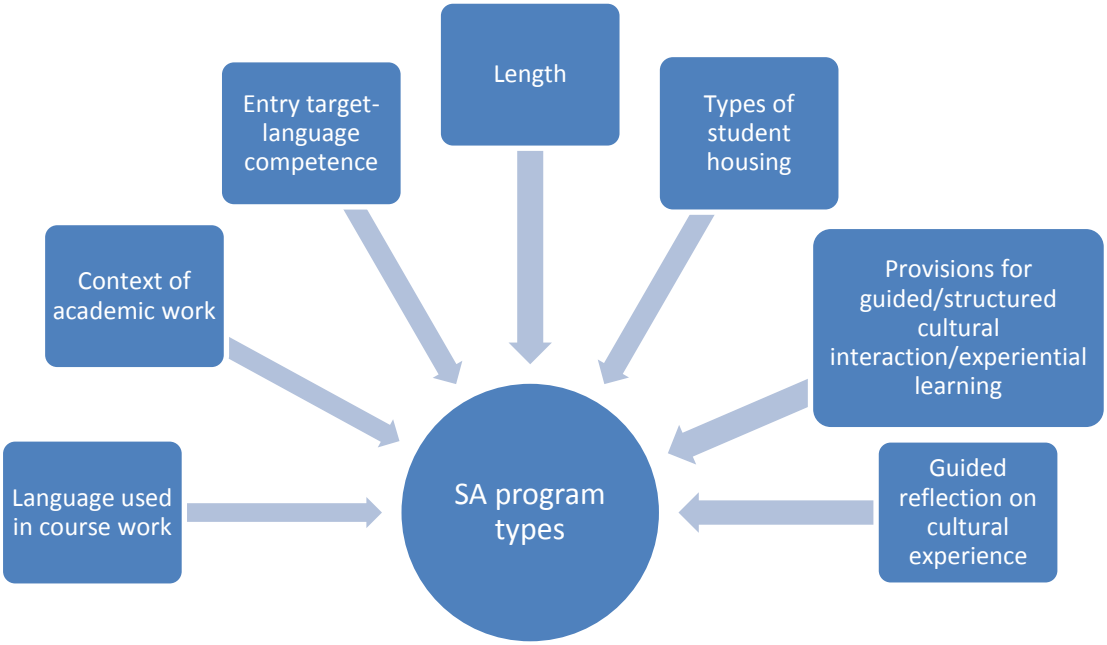

Figure 1: Seven defining components of SA programs. This figure is created based on the components outlined by Engle and Engle (2003, p. 8) who focus on culture-based program types in study destinations requiring foreign language competence.

One crucial aspect that shapes visiting students' experiences is the type of accommodation. By and large, homestay is seen as an ideal arrangement because it is assumed that it enables a student to practice language through daily conversations, learn culture through first-hand

experience and feel the warmth of family life. Yet previous studies have made contradictory findings, with some supporting the benefits of homestay (Allen, Dristas & Mills, 2007; Hashimoto, 1993; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Makino, 1996; McMeekin, 2006; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004), and others questioning its efficacy (Campbell, 2004; Rivers, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998). As will be shown in the literature review in Chapter 2, it is impossible to provide a single description of what homestay life is like as it partially depends on the nexus between host countries and students' countries of origin. However, there has been insufficient research to date that examines the intercultural experiences in the short-term Japanese homestay context to grasp how that specific experience pans out. Considerable potential is assumed rather than ensured for language and cultural learning, and for enhancing intercultural competence. Therefore, what needs to be established first is a more thorough understanding of the characteristics of the context. It is crucial to understand how the intercultural encounters play out between students and their host families so that the information can be used to maximise positive outcomes.

1.3 Context of the study

Australian universities have focussed on the internationalisation of higher education in recent years. As a part of the international strategies, outbound mobility opportunities for students are promoted by 97 % of tertiary institutions (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009b). Outbound mobility is a term used to refer to SA, and is widely acknowledged for fostering students' intercultural competence as global citizens by exposing them to different and unfamiliar situations (see chapter 4 for an examination of how SA is presented in Australian universities' official publications). The Australian Government supports the internationalisation of Australian undergraduates' experiences through studying and/or undertaking internships abroad. One recent influential initiative is the New Colombo Plan, which aims to lift knowledge of the Indo-Pacific region among Australian undergraduates (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2014). The 2014 pilot phase supports around 1300 short and longer-term mobility program students in four locations – Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

In traditional SA programs, students spend one or two semesters studying at an overseas partner university. However, in recent years, short-term programs of 1-8 weeks duration have

contributed to significant growth in the number of students who take up SA opportunities (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009a). Short-term programs enable participation for students who would otherwise be unable to participate in SA. For example, some students with inflexible degree structures cannot incorporate a semester abroad or some might feel hesitant about going abroad for long periods for a variety of reasons. Some students may use short programs as a trial before committing to a longer period of overseas study. Thus, short-term programs play an important role in expanding students' access to intercultural experiences abroad.

Homestay is an option in SA programs in a range of countries, and Japanese short-term programs in particular commonly incorporate homestay with local families. Homestay presents a unique dynamic for intercultural experiences. It is a significantly different experience from staying independently or in student accommodation because of the relational dynamics between students and their host families. In addition, Japanese homestay has a particular profile, in which young adult students are looked after in middle-class families with someone almost always being available for the student in the home. The homestay situation, where strangers try to look after someone instantly as a family member, creates complex circumstances of both unfamiliarity and intimacy simultaneously. Hence, neither the broader SA literature nor the intercultural communication literature that deals with different combinations of cultures and/or different kinds of contexts can be extrapolated to understand how the practice of intercultural communication is carried out in the short-term Japanese homestay context.

1.3.1 Researcher's background and motivation

Both personal and professional experiences over many years have prompted my curiosity about SA experiences in general, and particularly homestay. My first overseas trip was a one-month visit to the United States when I was 16 during a spring holiday with my Japanese high school. With our English teacher, a group of eight students attended various classes at a sister high school with each of us staying with American host families. Despite the language barrier, we managed daily communications with lots of gestures and using a dictionary. Surprisingly, 30 years later, my host mother and I still exchange Christmas cards.

I have been teaching Japanese to undergraduate students in Australia for 20 years. In this role, I have talked informally with students about their experiences of homestays in Japan. They all reported both a great time and their belief that the host family experience had accelerated their understanding of both Japanese language and, in particular, culture. I was also involved in organising two Japanese short-term exchange programs by liaising with the sister universities in Japan. Here the theme of opportunity continued with students often describing homestay as beneficial in improving their language skills and cultural understanding. One student, who was contemplating giving up learning Japanese, told me that homestay motivated her to continue. On the other hand, another student was disappointed as her experience differed greatly from her expectations. While some students reported how much they missed their host families after returning, there were students who could not wait for the stay to end. These diverse stories sparked my curiosity about what it is that they experience. Simultaneously, I felt that half the puzzle pieces were missing as all I was hearing were students' stories. Communication involves two-way processes. Thus, it seemed critical to listen to both students' and Japanese host families' perspectives in order to understand what both groups go through and why. As an educator who was in charge of selecting and sending students at the time, I also felt the need to discover if anything can be done to better prepare students.

1.4 Aim and scope

The aim of the present thesis is to gain in-depth knowledge about the ways in which the particular context of Japanese short-term homestay shape the intercultural experiences and relational dynamics between visiting students and their host families. It aims to elucidate how this specific cultural milieu with its distinctive characteristics impacts on daily interactions as well as issues that may arise. It investigates the kinds of assumptions and expectations students and host families bring to the short-term homestay context, the effect that the context has on the kinds of roles and relationships possible for them, how the context influences expectations in relation to teaching and learning experience, and the extent to which these expectations are fulfilled. The scope of the research is limited to experiences among undergraduate students from two Australian universities and Japanese families who host such students in homestays in two separate short-term SA programs.

1.5 Significance and the original contribution of the study

As mentioned in 1.3, the Australian tertiary sector promotes SA opportunities ranging from one or two semesters to those of shorter duration as part of their internationalisation strategies. The findings from the present study are significant given the importance of SA potential for enabling students to gain international experiences abroad. A homestay is often a crucial component in short-term programs to Japan such as those examined in the present study.

The benefits of SA for fostering students' intercultural competence are generally regarded as almost automatic outcomes from SA. However, students do not learn about other cultures simply by being exposed to different cultural milieus and experiencing intercultural communication with host nationals. On the contrary, simple exposure to differences risks reinforcing prejudice and stereotypical views (Bochner, 1982; Keller, 1990; Talburt & Stewart, 1999). Hence, in order to prevent such negative effects, and ensure positive effects, the right kinds of scaffolding and support become vital (Vande Berg, Quinn & Menyhart, 2012). To determine what kinds of scaffolding and support are appropriate and how they can be implemented, it is essential to first understand the nature of intercultural experiences, which are culturally and contextually specific. This is where the present thesis makes a contribution.

Although considerable literature has investigated SA, the present study differs from the existing studies in the following respects. The duration of SA programs that a majority of the studies investigated is one or two semesters, while relatively few studies have examined short-term SA. Similarly, the literature concerning Australians on SA programs in Japan is limited, and does not focus on short-term homestays. However, the length of stay, the accommodation situation, and the particular combination of cultures are crucial components that determine students' experiences abroad. In addition, the existing studies tend to account for only students' perceptions in examining their experiences, despite the fact that intercultural encounters involve both the visiting students and host nationals. The present study therefore elucidates the nature of intercultural experiences by comparing and contrasting the perceptions of both students and host families.

The findings will identify the expectations held by both groups of participants, the extent to which these are fulfilled, issues that may arise and the underlying reasons for these. Hence,

the contribution of the present study is to significantly deepen understanding of short-term Japanese homestays as a SA component, and lay the groundwork for future studies seeking to enhance the intercultural experience.

1.6 Overview of the thesis

This thesis consists of eight further chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature to situate the present project in the broader related research fields, and to show how a contribution can be made to the existing research. The review describes the trends in the current research while identifying the areas that have been less investigated to date.

Chapter 3 explains the methodologies applied. It explains the rationale for a qualitative approach in the research design, and outlines the data collection methods, the procedures for recruiting the participants, and the method used for analysis.

Chapter 4 examines the kinds of information about SA in general, and about short-term programs and homestays in particular, that are readily available in official publications of Australian and Japanese universities that are accessible from their SA websites. In essence, the aim is to investigate how SA is discursively represented.

Chapter 5 provides demographic information on students and host families participants. The information includes their age, language proficiency level and previous travel abroad experience. This information enables contextualisation of the participants' accounts of their intercultural experiences and perceptions.

As the result of analysis, three themes emerged in the findings. Hence, the findings are presented according to the themes as three chapters: Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Chapters 6 and 7 are primarily related to assumptions and expectations about the homestay experience and the effect the short-term homestay context have on the roles and relationships for students and host families. Chapter 6 focuses on expectations of family roles during the stay whereas chapter 7 explores the way in which the possibility of a post-homestay relationship is envisaged. By contrast, chapter 8 discusses how the context of homestay as an international exchange shapes expectations and explores experiences in relation to teaching and learning.

The thesis ends with a concluding chapter 9, which synthesises the major findings and details how they contribute to the existing literature. The implications of the findings are explored, particularly in relation to the literature about advising SA students. By raising the question as to what kinds of interventions are feasible and productive, and how they can be implemented in the context of a two to three week short-term homestay, the thesis lays the groundwork for future studies testing the effectiveness of such interventions.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Before analysing the intercultural issues that arise between visiting Australian university students and host families in short-term Japanese homestays, it is necessary to situate the present project in the broader research fields and to show how it contributes to the existing research. This chapter begins with reviewing research related to intercultural communication (2.1), then narrows the focus down to Study Abroad (SA) research in general (2.2). Study abroad is a broad field which encompasses various components, so the focus is to be further narrowed to reviewing studies of homestay in various countries (2.3). Then studies of homestay in Japan (2.4) and Japanese discourses shaping the homestay experience (2.5) are reviewed since they directly relate to my research context and questions.

In reflecting on the findings of previous SA and homestay literature, this review highlights the trends in the current research and the relative paucity of research documenting Australian university students' SA experiences, despite these universities explicitly valuing SA opportunities to foster their students' global citizenship. As intercultural experiences in homestay are highly culturally and contextually specific, I argue that the existing studies do not analyse participants' daily interactions during short-term homestays in Japan well enough to fully understand the nature of these experiences.

2.1 Intercultural Communication and its contextually specific nature

Intercultural communication is generally conceptualised as communication between people from different national cultures (Gudykunst, 2003, p. 163). It is commonly assumed that travel that involves interaction with local residents will foster intercultural communication ability. The present study focuses on Australian university students travelling to Japan to stay with Japanese families for two or three weeks and examines how the Australian students and Japanese host families perceive their intercultural experiences in order to establish the understanding of the nature of intercultural communication in these settings.

The ability to manage intercultural communication is referred to as intercultural communicative competence. Scholars throughout the past thirty years have defined intercultural communicative competence in a number of ways, without settling on a final definition (see Deardorff, 2006, p. 242 for an extensive list of scholars who offer a variety of

definitions). Nevertheless, there is an emerging consensus that what constitutes intercultural communicative competence is an ability to be "effective" and "appropriate" in intercultural communication (e.g., Bennett, 2009; Deardorff, 2008). According to Bennett (2009), it is most often viewed as "a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts" (p. 97).

Byram (1997) contends that visiting foreign countries is one of the most important means of developing intercultural communicative competence as the opportunities put learners in personal and direct contact with people in different cultures and societies. Hence, he recommends integrating visits and exchanges into the foreign language curriculum (p. 19). Over the years, there has been a widespread assumption that a native speaker-like ability in the target language and culture should be considered as the ideal model for language learners (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1998). Both Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1998) considered this model to be problematic, so Byram coined the term "intercultural speaker" in order to redefine the goal. An intercultural speaker is described as a language learner who has an ability to interact with people from other cultures, accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, mediate between different perspectives, and be conscious of their evaluations and differences (Byram et al, 2001, p. 5). From this theoretical perspective, in the context of the present project, the ideal for Australian university students visiting Japan is not to become Japanese-like by accepting their perspectives and imitating their behaviours, but to become an intercultural speaker who can mediate between the perspectives of their Japanese hosts and their own perspective.

Although Byram recommends integrating visits to a foreign country, becoming an intercultural speaker is not an automatic result of travel or even of extensive amounts of communication. Byram simultaneously cautions that travel does not automatically churn out intercultural speakers. If students are to take full advantage of their time abroad, they need to be well prepared for the experience so that they do not return with reinforced prejudices and stereotypes (Byram et al., 2001, p. 4; see also section 2.2.1 below). Adequate preparation is vital and Deardorff argues that SA programs should "address intercultural competence before students go abroad" (2008, p. 42). This means a necessity for some form of pre-departure information and training. In fact, as Vande Berg, Connor-Linton and Paige (2009) contend, "students do not learn from simple exposure, but because of the ways they respond to exposure" (p. 24). In other words, although there is potential for students to learn about other

cultures by being exposed to different cultural milieus and experiencing intercultural communication with host nationals, simple exposure to differences risks students producing or reinforcing prejudice, hostile feelings and stereotypical views. Therefore, what is needed is to provide the right kinds of scaffolding and support in order to prevent such negative effects. The literature about advising SA students suggests that interventions can be implemented at three possible phases: pre-departure, during SA and post-return (Coleman, 2005; Deardorff, 2008, 2011; DeNooy & Hanna, 2003; Jackson, 2006; Kippa, 2009; Vande Berg, Quinn & Menyhart, 2012; Woody Thebodo & Marx, 2005). The aspect of possible interventions will be further discussed in detail in the final chapter (9.2 Implications). In order to design appropriate interventions and implement them, the first step is to gain understanding of the nature of interactions that take place in an intercultural context. For this reason, the present thesis aims to contribute by providing a detailed understanding of what goes on during Japanese short-term homestays through an in-depth analysis of the intercultural issues that arise. The findings can be utilised to better prepare departing students so they can obtain maximum benefit from their overseas stay and to guide university staff in preparing students before departure.

Currently, there are two types of information readily available for all kinds of travellers to learn about Japanese culture and communication with Japanese: guide books for the general population and more academic/theoretical guides to Japanese culture and communication. Neither of these really fulfils the needs of departing students in the context of short homestays.

Considerable information is accessible through the many guide books available on Japan,[1] which are designed for general tourists and business people. Often included in the information offered is practical know-how such as shoe removal customs in Japanese houses and exchanging name cards or business cards called *meishi* as a culturally important practice (e.g., Reiber, 2013, p. 29). This kind of information is useful to a certain extent, although naturally these guide books cannot possibly cover all information relevant to different kinds of situations. Certain information such as the manner in which business cards should be

[1] A search on Amazon.com, the online bookstore, under the book category using "Japan travel guide" and "Japan guidebooks" as the keywords, yielded 1,537 and 6,997 items respectively (accessed on 8 September 2013).

exchanged can be less relevant to the specific context of university students staying with Japanese families for 2-3 weeks.

Following a more theoretical approach than guide books, the dimensions of cross-cultural difference are extensively discussed among scholars. One well-known dimension is the division between low- and high-context communications. While Australian culture is considered low-context, Japanese culture is labelled high-context (Hall, 1977; Hofstede et al., 2010; Triandis, 1995). According to these divisions, Australians supposedly prefer explicit communication where the message is clearly verbalised. On the other hand, high-context Japan is presented as a society that collectively prefers more implicit than explicit communication. In other words, the meaning and intention are inferred indirectly within the situational context without explicit verbal constructs among Japanese (Gudykunst et al., 1996). These contrasting communication styles may explain why Japanese are perceived to be more vague and indirect than English (Doi, 1996; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1993; Haugh, 2003; McClure, 2000). Knowledge about these differences is helpful because such differences can generate misunderstandings, "culture bumps" (Archer, 1986) or even conflicts.

The problem in the use of the low- and high-context dimension lies in overgeneralising the communication patterns. As De Nooy and Hanna (2003) point out, rather than entire national cultures being low- or high-context, it is specific cultural practices that tend towards one or the other (p. 80; cf. Gallois & Callan, 1997, pp. 44-50). The blanket generalisation that a particular culture is high- or low-context overlooks the differences that depend on a specific context, interpersonal relations and other variables. For example, in the family context, communication is likely to be high-context in both Australia and Japan as family members have assumed knowledge, thus making them less reliant on explicit information. Although communication within a family setting is usually high-context, this general rule cannot simply be extrapolated to the case of homestay. As an instant family, host parents need to explain about the family rules such as their dinner time and curfew to their host student. Therefore, the communication will involve more explicit (low-context) language to bridge a stranger-family relation, but also typical high-context family communication as well. Hence, there is likely to be an unusual tension between high- and low-context communications.

Questions of how cultural values such as high-context communication are embedded in actual practice in everyday life depend on the particular context and relational dynamics. What homestay students experience is a situation where they are treated as a part of their host family, while trying to communicate with their host parents on daily topics, yet not necessarily knowing cultural rules. Thus, there is a need for information with regard to situations that resemble those of Australian students in the Japanese short-term homestay context, which, as we shall see, involves quite specific relational dynamics. As Deardorff (2009) identifies, within research in relation to intercultural communication, what appropriate behaviours look like in different cultures and in different contexts is a key area for further research (p. 268). If a student is to communicate effectively and appropriately with their host family in the short-term homestay context, it is essential to gain insights into what effective and appropriate communication means in the situation. This will involve studying daily interactions on both domestic and wider topics in the peculiar combination of intimacy and unfamiliarity that constitutes the short-term homestay situation. Hence, my study aims to contribute to enhancing understanding of the nature of intercultural experiences in the specific cultural milieu of Japanese short homestay in order to identify a framework for future interventions.

2.2 Study Abroad experience

As mentioned earlier, studying abroad, which places learners in direct contact with other cultures, is viewed as an opportunity to foster their intercultural communicative competence as intercultural speakers and is heavily promoted by Australian universities (see chapter 4). As will be reviewed in the following sections, the potential benefits of studying abroad are not limited to development of the attributes of an intercultural speaker, but encompass a range of areas of personal growth.

Study Abroad (SA) or student exchange[2] is widely acknowledged as fostering global citizenship by exposing participants to different and unfamiliar situations (Zemach-Bersin,

[2] Different terminologies are used to refer to arrangements whereby students gain some form of education outside of their usual country of residence. Examples include Study Abroad (SA), Residence Abroad, Education Abroad, student mobility and student exchange (see Forum on Education Abroad, 2011). Even when referring to the same type of experience, different parts of the world may use different terminology. For example, SA is more commonly used in the US compared with Residence Abroad which is more common in Europe. I will use SA to cover all these types of travel.

2009). In essence, SA programs enable students to immerse themselves in different cultures for one or two semesters, or shorter periods. As we shall see in the following section, the literature suggests that such cross-cultural experiences result in important personal growth in various areas including cross-cultural understanding, intercultural competence, identity development, self-confidence and maturity, the acquisition of foreign language skills and the creation of a network of friends. Naturally, however, the changes do not happen uniformly as they depend on a variety of both internal (e.g., personality, language proficiency level) and external factors (e.g., duration, type of housing arrangements, provisions for guided cultural learning) (Engle & Engle, 2003). For instance, the length of time spent abroad can be one semester, one year or shorter.[3] Short-term programs of one to eight weeks, as Chieffo and Griffiths (2009) explain, increasingly play an important role in attracting students who may otherwise not be able to participate in SA for various reasons. When students stay abroad for a short time, the kind of experience and learning outcomes is likely to differ from staying for a long period of time. It is important to gain understanding of both short and long-term SA contexts. Yet relatively little attention has been paid to the short-term SA context in the academic literature as we shall see in the following sections.

2.2.1 SA experience and its effects on attitudinal change towards the host culture

Previous research has been primarily concerned with identifying students' evaluations of their SA experience as a whole or assessing their learning outcomes in certain areas. Students generally evaluate SA experiences positively, attesting that the overall cross-cultural experiences result in personal growth in many ways (Asaoka, 2008; Clyne & Rizvi, 1998). Although the literature on SA outcomes tends to focus on immediate post-SA outcomes, its long-term impact on global engagement, including future career choices, is also extrapolated (Paige et al., 2009). Furthermore, researchers argue that SA experiences enable students to reflect on their own society and culture, which leads them to re-evaluate and become more acutely aware of their cultural identity (Allen, et al., 2007; Dolby, 2004, 2005, 2007; Hashimoto, 2003). At the same time, the experiences are said to generate attitudinal change towards the host culture (Sell, 1983).

[3] Hashimoto (2009) uses a Japanese word 短期留学 *tanki ryūgaku* (short-term SA) to refer to study at partner institutions for one semester or one year (p. 115).

There are two contrasting conceptualisations with regard to what happens when SA participants interact with locals in the host country. Social contact theory suggests that intergroup contact reduces prejudice (Allport, 1954). Allport argues that contact among different ethnic or racial groups will reduce prejudice if certain conditions are met. It is theorised that intergroup contact maximally reduces prejudice when: 1) the two groups share similar status and interests; 2) the situation fosters personal, intimate intergroup contact; 3) the participants do not fit the stereotyped conceptions of their groups; and 4) the activities cut across group lines (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). Based on this premise, the SA experience can become an opportunity to learn about people whose cultural backgrounds, outlooks and styles of communication are different from one's own, hence students' intercultural sensitivity can be developed and prejudice can be reduced (Paige et al., 2007).

On the other hand, a more sceptical view also exists that "there is no conclusive evidence that would link study abroad to cross-cultural understanding or to the development of a cross-cultural personality" (Scheuerholz-Lehr, 2007, pp. 195-196). In fact, it is hypothesised that it almost inevitably leads to conflict due to hostility toward the out-group and the in-group's sense of superiority. As argued by Bochner (1982) and Keller (1990), mere contact with other cultures may simply reinforce stereotypes rather than fostering comprehension and mutual respect. When something is different from our own values, or differently done from our own practice, it is often unconsciously evaluated negatively rather than being simply accepted as different. As a result, SA participants may develop hostile feelings towards the host nation based on their in-country experiences.

Previous studies show that SA experiences do not necessarily automatically lead to positive cross-cultural understanding or positive attitudinal changes amongst students. Students can suffer from negative cross-cultural encounters, which generate hostile perceptions towards host cultures (e.g., Ayano, 2006; Laubscher, 1994; Talburt & Stewart, 1999). If fostering cross-cultural understanding is one valued outcome from SA programs, it is crucial to ensure a positive attitudinal change. Enhancing the understanding of circumstances in which students form certain attitudes will be helpful to prepare students for their intercultural encounters.

2.2.2 Second Language Acquisition as an effect of SA

In addition to the area of cross-cultural understandings and attitudes towards the host culture, research findings point to other SA outcomes. Among them, research has been predominantly undertaken in the language-learning domain. Second language acquisition (SLA) as a potential outcome of SA has especially attracted scholarly interest. As Sussex (2008) points out, study abroad is viewed primarily as an opportunity for language learning in the applied linguistics research literature (p. 106). There has evolved a general assumption that students who go abroad will become proficient in their use of the target language. In order to verify this assumption, much research has been conducted across different languages by focusing on one or more aspects (i.e. speaking skills, listening skills, fluency, grammatical knowledge, or motivation etc.) with the use of pre- and post-tests (e.g., Allen & Herron, 2003, Bacon, 2002; Davidson, 2007; Dekeyser, 1991; Freed, 1995; Marriott & Enomoto, 1995; Rivers, 1998). The overall findings suggest that students generally demonstrate improvements in the area of SLA after SA. Some studies, however, find very little improvement in students' linguistic performance in certain areas. For example, Australian students in the study by Marriott and Enomoto (1995) show an improvement in fluency in spoken Japanese after a year in Japan. However, in terms of grammatical accuracy or syntactic complexity, the students show little change. Thus, it cannot be claimed that SA provides a direct pathway to language proficiency for all individuals.

Apart from measuring the change within individuals by comparing their language proficiency before and after SA, some studies have adopted a "between groups" approach, comparing the outcome measured for those who studied abroad and their counterparts who studied in their home country (e.g., Cubillos, et al., 2008; Huebner, 1995; Lafford, 1995; Matsumura, 2001; Sasaki, 2007). Most of these studies find that the SA group perform better, although the differences between groups are not necessarily significant. Moreover, these studies examine various skills in different languages such as listening comprehension in Spanish and reading skills in Japanese, hence it is hard to draw an overall conclusion. As Segalowitz and Freed (2004) point out, SA context appears to have some advantages although the relationship between what a context offers and the nature of what an individual brings to the learning situation is complex (p. 196). Therefore, SA does not necessarily guarantee improvements in the area of SLA for the participants.

2.2.3 Study Abroad: outcomes and process

The SA literature has primarily focused on the changes that manifest themselves among participants as a result of their SA experiences. A common aspect among the above studies is that all concern measurable outcomes for students after SA. In comparison, relatively little attention has been paid to the kind of experiences that the participants have gone through - what we could call the "process" (Wang, 2010, p. 56). In other words, what is missing is information with regard to the circumstances under which these outcomes are brought about. While it is certainly important to examine the outcomes, the different factors that may have contributed to shaping a particular outcome need to be better understood. This is because SA can encompass very different experiences. The whole experience is multifaceted with many variables potentially influencing their experience. For instance, when one stays in a university dormitory, the kind of interactions, language and relational dynamics students engage in is likely to be different from when one stays with a local family. Staying with local families is very specific and deserves attention. Homestays have indeed attracted attention from researchers as an important SA component, as the following section demonstrates. Reviewing these studies gives some insights into day-to-day experiences and activities with families in various host countries, which enables us to glimpse into the process of learning, not just outcomes.

2.3 Homestay: Overview

Homestay is a cross-cultural educational phenomenon that is widely considered to make a positive contribution to cross-cultural understanding (Klepinger, 1995). Its origin dates back to 1932 when Donald Watt founded an organisation named Experiment in International Living (EIL) in the United States. Based on the idea that "people learn to live together by living together," the participants were placed in the homes of host families to enhance intercultural and/or language learning. It was not necessarily designed for students who go abroad for study, but had various aims such as preparing outbound Peace Corps volunteers for their assignments (Federation EIL, 2013). In recent years, homestays have been organised in many countries though research tends to focus on homestay in certain countries, including Australia, Canada, France, Japan, Mexico and New Zealand. As Gutel (2008) explains, within the field of international education, the term homestay refers to an environment in which a student lives with a local family while engaging in a specified activity, such as

studying or volunteering abroad. Theoretically, a homestay situation converts strangers from different cultural backgrounds into instant families for a limited time, and promotes intercultural understanding and friendships. According to Brecht, Frank, Keesling, O'Mara and Walton (1997), it can give the students "very rich, first-hand experience in the target culture and using their language skills with native speakers in circumstances with direct real-world consequences" (p. 11).

The duration of the stay is dependent upon the length of the student's program, ranging from a few days to one year. Originally, host families were voluntary-based, but in recent years, as Campbell (2004) and Richardson (2003) explain, homestay has developed into a kind of commercial activity in some countries, where it is offered to overseas students coming to study at language institutions, and in secondary and tertiary education (e.g., Australia, Canada, New Zealand). Students generally arrange a homestay through their educational institutions or a variety of private agencies. As for the host family, each has different characteristics such as age, number of family members and size of the home. The host family may consist of a single parent or a two-parent family with or without children, or a retired couple (Campbell, 2004; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Richardson, 2003). In addition to the different family compositions, the combination of the visiting student's and host family's nationalities varies. This variety leads to a wide range of evaluations among participants about their experiences of daily life together, as will be shown in the following sections.

2.3.1 Participants' overall evaluations of their homestay experience

Previous investigative studies into how students and host families perceive the homestay experience find a range of responses. Both groups evaluate their overall experiences in a complex way, pointing to both positive and negative aspects. Data collection methods vary with questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with students, host families or both students and host families. Some of these studies supplement interview data with questionnaires, student diaries and/or recorded conversations between students and host families (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004; Tanaka, 2007; Wilkinson, 1998). The findings suggest divided opinions and perceptions among students. While some are reportedly satisfied with their experiences, others are dissatisfied for a variety of reasons.

Likewise, host families comment on both satisfying and unsatisfying aspects of their experiences (Campbell, 2004; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). Together, the findings suggest that both groups hold explicit and implicit expectations about what homestay life should be like.

When students reflect on their homestay experiences, three topics are salient: the idea of being treated as a family member as opposed to a boarder or guest, the expectation of practicing the language with host family members and the possibility of receiving cultural lessons from them (Campbell, 2004; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). Campbell, who interviewed 40 Chinese students and 33 host families in New Zealand in order to explore their experiences, documents many unsatisfactory aspects from the interviewees' perspective. One of the recurring themes among the students' data is emotional warmth, which refers to a feeling of being included in the family. Despite the students' expectations of being treated as the children or grandchildren of the host parents, only four students are reportedly happy in this regard. What they mean by being treated as the children, however, is not clear. One student describes his expectation towards the host family as initiating communication to ensure he is doing well with everything. Whether this coincides with expectations held by other students or the family members is not explained. In fact, host families offer different insights. One host parent complains about students not cleaning their rooms, which goes against their expectation of a family member. On the other hand, there are students who do not see cleaning as their job as they have paid the homestay fee. In other words, on the one hand, they assume the role of a family member, but on the other hand, they want to be treated as a guest. Hence, a contradiction is noted in these Chinese students' remarks.

Campbell (2004) also highlights the common expectation among Chinese students that they will practice English and receive cultural lessons from host families. Some students comment that their expectations are met in this regard although others are disappointed because their host families are too busy and they spend little time together. The host families, however, do not necessarily consider being available to hold conversations or help students with homework as their job. This perception is shared by some of the host families in Australia who have hosted mainly students from Asian countries in Richardson's study (2003). In the focus group interviews, the families expressed their frustration at being expected to be available constantly for answering questions related to English with students. Hence, the

findings from the studies by both Campbell and Richardson show mismatched expectations between students and host families.

These topics of treatment as a family member and receiving language and culture lessons are also raised in studies that concern the homestay experiences of American students in Mexico and Spain (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). The combination of their 2002 study that interviewed 24 host families and their 2004 study that interviewed students and on-site program directors illustrates how homestay is perceived from different perspectives. In contrast with Campbell (2004) who highlights unsatisfactory aspects of homestay, these studies suggest that the homestay offers various advantages. All three groups of interviewees agree that the homestay benefits the students both culturally and linguistically, although both students and host families still encounter difficult periods of initial adjustment, and communication difficulties and cultural differences at times. The host families also comment on what they view as their role, which includes being a surrogate parent as well as teacher and counsellor. Assuming the role of surrogate parent is related to the idea of the student being regarded as a family member. This family concept seems to clash with the American students' sense of independence. Host mothers complain about their students just passing by and not spending enough time with the family due to their busy social schedule. From the host mothers' perspectives, their students are not acting like a part of the family. These students, however, consider having to constantly explain their schedule as a loss of independence. Simultaneously, contradictory tensions are noted when the students remark that they are not invited enough to join in the family activities. Hence, again the expectation of being treated as a family member influences the participants' evaluation of the experience, but the accounts of these American students in Mexican and Spanish families show a curious contrast with the Chinese students in New Zealand. On the one hand, American students seek more freedom and independence while wishing to be included in family activities. On the other hand, Chinese students are inclined to be more dependent on their host families, seeking a closer relationship. Thus, the expectations can be related to the students' cultures of origin. That is why it is necessary to focus on the particular homestay context, as the information from studies about students from different cultural backgrounds in other host countries cannot be simply extrapolated to understand the experiences of Australian students going to Japan.

2.3.2 Linguistic and cultural benefits of homestay

It is widely believed that homestay enables students to immerse themselves in the language and culture of the host nation. Underlying this perception seems to be an assumption that students and their host families are constantly engaged in interaction. The immersion and interactions in daily lives are viewed as automatically leading to improved language skills and enhanced cultural understanding among students (Wilkinson, 2002, p. 157). The following studies examine the homestay effect either on students' language skills or both language and cultural aspects.

Rivers (1998) is a landmark study that is frequently quoted in the SA literature because his finding challenges the widespread belief that homestay environments accelerate students' linguistic skills. Rivers scrutinises the homestay effect on American students' linguistic gains in Russian compared with those staying in dormitories in Russia after a semester or year-long program. Rivers analysed data consisting of 2,529 records collected over 20 years, including pre- and post-program oral, listening and reading proficiency tests. The findings are striking: homestay has a negative effect on speaking gains, has no apparent effect on listening gains, and has a positive effect on reading gains. Hence, he describes homestay as "a mixed blessing, benefiting reading, but not speaking or listening" (p. 497), questioning the view that presents homestay as a provider of great language input. For possible causes, Rivers refers to Frank (1997), an ethnographic study, to gain insights into the homestay experience in Russia. According to Frank (1997), both students and hosts frequently express frustration at the low proficiency of the students' Russian, which limits the interaction between them. Not only did they have very few interactions, but the students spent substantial time in their rooms doing homework, which may explain the findings in Rivers' study.

Allen, Dristas and Mills (2007) also compare the effect of homestay and non-homestay for American students. Unlike Rivers, Allen et al. examine measurable effects in both linguistic and cultural aspects. Comparisons are made between 110 students who stayed with local families and 79 students who stayed in dormitories or shared apartments with other students during 4-5 week summer programs in France, Italy and Spain. The homestay group's reported post-program linguistic abilities are significantly higher than those of their non-homestay peers, hence indicating the homestay's positive effects. In addition, the homestay group identified more strongly with the host culture and less with their native culture.

Therefore, the finding suggests that housing arrangements may play a role in shaping students' cultural experiences differently and subsequently affect the students' interpretations of the host culture.

The linguistic and cultural benefits of a homestay situation may vary. This point is emphasised by Wilkinson (1998), who looks into the nature of linguistic and cultural immersion for seven American students in France. By analysing interviews, surveys and taped conversations between students and host families, Wilkinson finds that the homestay environment can be a source of cultural misunderstanding and confusion at times. She also finds that students can manage daily conversations with their host families with fairly limited content, that is to say, without necessarily speaking French to a great extent. Therefore, she "challenges the popular belief that a host family is always the most beneficial housing arrangement overseas" (p. 33). Wilkinson makes the point that the benefits students get from homestay depend on the particular combination of host families and students, emphasising the individual differences that occur.

The fact that homestay experiences are not uniform among the participants is echoed by Tanaka (2007), whose focus is on the language learning aspect. Tanaka interviewed 29 Japanese students who studied English in New Zealand to find out under what circumstances they had contact with English and its effects on language learning. Some of these students experienced homestays while some stayed in dormitories and others did both. Among those who stayed with families, several students were satisfied with the way they interacted with host families, which they considered to have improved their speaking and listening skills. Others, however, were dissatisfied as their host families seemed to treat them as a boarder or a flatmate and paid little attention to them. The finding suggests that the students generally hold high expectations of being engaged in constant conversations with native speakers, who are their host families in the case of homestay, but the experiences do not always match their expectations. Hence, the combination of the findings from the above studies questions the assumption noted by Wilkinson (2002) that homestay is universally advantageous for students' linguistic and cultural learning.

2.3.3 Summary of the homestay literature

Although homestays are often seen as a great way of learning language and culture, studies have shown that this does not always occur. Host families display differing attitudes and perceptions with regard to their roles in relation to the students. While some are willing to treat them as a family member and play language and culture tutoring roles, others are less prepared to take on these roles. Even pinpointing what being a family member means is difficult, as the meaning seems to fluctuate. Although individual differences among participants play their part, simultaneously certain characteristics specific to students' cultures of origins and to host cultures are noteworthy. As seen in some studies, being a family member may connote constantly holding conversations in some cultures while family members are assumed to be more independent from each other in other cultures. Therefore, even students who travel to the same destination may hold different expectations about what their experiences within the host family household should be like.

The above studies reinforce the fact that it is hard to generalise about homestay throughout the world. Indeed, it is impossible to give a single, simple description of what homestay life is like. The nature of homestay life and how the participants evaluate their experiences are very specific depending on the nexus between host countries and students' countries of origin. Naturally, there are other multiple variables involved such as students' and host families' personalities and students' language proficiency levels. Therefore, we need to focus on a particular context involving particular groups of people. To understand Japanese homestay experience for Australian university students, the focus needs to be placed specifically on the Japanese context. Let us turn to what previous studies have found about homestays in Japan.

2.4 Homestays in Japan

The first homestay group that came to Japan from the United States in 1940 was described by a Tokyo Newspaper as 集団交換息子と娘 *shūdan kōkan musuko to musume* (group exchange of sons and daughters) (EIL Japan, 2013). That particular term suggests that underlying this concept was an assumption that the overseas visitors were to be regarded as family members. The article commented that such exchange was expected to create an amicable relationship both at personal and national levels. Then, after World War II and the subsequent Allied Occupation, the homestay practice resumed in 1955 when the first group from Experiment in International Living (EIL) visited Kanazawa city in Japan for a month-long-homestay. Naturally, there existed no simple word to translate homestay into Japanese,

hence the English term "homestay" was borrowed as a loan word. The concept is referred to as ホームステイ *hōmusutei* (homestay) and is written in katakana script, commonly used for words of foreign origin. Nowadays, Japanese who are interested in becoming host families can register with various organisations such as Rotary and international centres within universities. Visiting students can participate in short or long term homestay in Japan, which can be free of charge or involve payment of a nominal homestay fee. Some tertiary students who are in Japan long term (i.e., more than one year) and live in dormitories can still wish to experience a taste of Japanese family lifestyle. For these students, some universities arrange weekend homestays (see Hirota & Oka, 2009).

Existing studies about Japanese homestay tend to paint a rosy picture by highlighting its potential for Japanese-language learning. Makino (1996) has been taking groups of American university students on a two-month summer intensive program in Japan over many years. He explains that during these two months many students can achieve the same proficiency level expected after one year of university studies in the US. Nineteen students' responses to his questionnaires show that they perceive the host families as essential resources for their language practice, and hence as the key factor for rapid improvement in their speaking skills. The students affirm that the constant opportunities for daily conversations helped them practice informal Japanese better than a classroom setting. In particular, they underscore how helpful their host mothers were by frequently correcting their Japanese. While this study is based only on students' evaluations, the following two studies empirically illustrate how daily interactions benefit SLA.

Both Hashimoto (1993) and McMeekin (2006) take micro-analytic approaches to examining the homestay interactions. They audio-taped dinner time conversations held between students and host families, and conducted conversational analysis. Hashimoto (1993) finds that the Australian student in her study received a great deal of language input as the family members seldom used English and the student was often able to ask for clarification and explanations in simpler Japanese. What is missing in this study is, however, a benchmark as it refers to only one student's experience in the homestay setting. McMeekin (2006) goes further in this direction by comparing the interactions of five American students with their respective Japanese host families in the homestay and with their Japanese teachers in the classroom in Japan. McMeekin's findings clearly show that the homestay environment provides more

comprehensible input. For instance, in response to students' requests for clarification, host family members modified their utterances more than twice as often as teachers. Furthermore, family members often provided several repetitions, reformulations and examples that allowed students to engage in increased negotiations. Accordingly, McMeekin contends that the Japanese family homestay is superior to the classroom from a SLA perspective. The combination of these findings clearly suggests that a Japanese homestay setting offers an ideal environment in SLA. However, language learning forms only one aspect of the homestay experience. As reviewed earlier, the multi-layered functions of homestay include being included as a family member and receiving cultural lessons through daily interactions.

While Shikaura (2007) emphasises the language learning benefit of homestay, her study also points to other areas deemed advantageous and problematic by students and host families. Shikaura collected questionnaires from 49 students living in homestay, 50 students living in dormitories and 100 host families to discover more about their daily communications. The mostly American students who were on one semester or longer programs and Japanese host families were asked about the details of their conversations in Japanese. From a language learning perspective, the study finds homestay students have access to more hours of conversing in Japanese compared with those in dormitories. Shikaura argues that the longer practice would accelerate their progress with oral skills, and her contention is supported by their Japanese teachers' observations. Thus, the finding supports the recurring positive effect of the homestay environment on language learning.

Additionally, open-ended questions about good and bad things about their experiences yielded a variety of responses. These included discussion of topics including expectations for cultural learning, being a part of the family, meals and household rules, and echoed findings in other studies reviewed earlier (i.e., Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). For the students, typical highlights included a feeling of being treated as a family member, spending time together talking about daily events, and being served delicious home-made Japanese meals while typical complaints referred to the families being too busy, thus limiting interactions to short ritual greetings, being served Western-style breakfasts rather than more traditional dishes and curfew rules. For the host families, typical highlights included their students' willing attitudes to try any dishes and their compliments on the served food while typical complaints referred to students who were unwilling to try dishes, those who remained silent on tasting them and those who did not follow family rules. These

positive and negative responses reinforce the point that both host families and students consciously or unconsciously hold certain expectations about each other and of what homestay life should be like.

Students' expectations are likely to affect how they make adjustments to the host culture. Okazaki-Luff (1992) examines cultural adjustments among Australian post-secondary Rotary exchange students who attended a high school during a one-year homestay in Japan. Through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, Okazaki-Luff elucidates the kinds of problems and difficulties the students experienced. Although the students' responses encompass their overall experiences, what they refer to extensively are incidents and interpersonal relations with host families. One prominent finding underscores students' difficulties in adjusting to their loss of independence or freedom, which echoes complaints by American students in Spanish and Mexican homestays (Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). These Australian and American students share a similar belief that 18 years olds should be regarded as adults. Accordingly, what these students find difficult is adjusting to what they consider to be treatment as a child.

Iino's studies (1996, 2006) are distinct from the above Japanese homestay studies as he aims to describe the characteristics of Japanese homestay culture. He takes an ethnographic approach to exploring the linguistic and behavioural features of some Japanese families who hosted American students for two months during a summer intensive course. He describes his study as an ethnographic microanalysis, a methodology which originated in interactional sociolinguistics (Hymes, 1974), and he video-taped interactions between Japanese host families and their students at the dinner table in 30 households. The data is supplemented by questionnaires and interviews with both students and hosts. As a result of this analysis, Iino identifies specific characteristics in the way that the host families present Japanese language. While the host families often answer questions, repeat and rephrase to help the student's comprehension, students' language mistakes are sometimes tolerated or become a source of amusement as *kawaii* (cute). Therefore, no corrective feedback is given in the way McMeekin (2006) suggests. In addition, a majority of the host parents interviewed express the strong belief that the Kyoto dialect normally spoken in their daily lives is not the correct form of Japanese to teach non-native learners. This belief results in a curious phenomenon in which the language they speak with the students is neither the regional dialect nor standard Japanese, but "foreigner talk" (Iino, 2006, p. 168). "Foreigner talk" is a register used by

native speakers when they address non-native speakers, which is often characterized as adopting simplified sentence structures to facilitate non-native speakers' comprehension (Ferguson, 1975; Long, 1981). Hence, Iino questions whether or not the particular kind of language can be described as authentic language. Iino's findings partly resonate with those in some other homestay studies (e.g., Hashimoto, 1993; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Shikaura, 2007) as they show that homestay is advantageous for language learning through interactions with the host family. However, his findings partly contrast with the behaviours of host families in McMeekin (2006) as host family members do not necessarily correct student's mistakes.

Another curious finding of Iino is the particular way that the host families present Japanese culture including food for the American guests. Consciously or unconsciously, the host families are selective in the way they present culture and food. Iino calls this phenomenon a "*gaijinized*" presentation which emphasises the uniqueness of the Japanese. The term *gaijin* is a shortened version of *gaikokujin* (a foreigner), but at the same time it can convey the meaning of an outsider. As the term is perceived as offensive to foreigners, it is generally only used in casual forms and not in public documents. Iino uses the term *gaijinized* in order to express the particular choice and/or modification from what usually happens for the sake of presenting something to people from overseas. His examples include a presentation of *nattō*, fermented soy beans. Iino points out that, despite the fact that not all Japanese like this particular food, it has become a ritual to present it to a foreign guest as an authentic Japanese food. He highlights situations in which a host comments "an excellent foreigner" to a student who ate it or "a strange foreigner" to a student who liked the food. He contends that the episodes indicate the hosts' expectations that foreigners' behaviours are supposed to be deviant from that of the Japanese. This idea of emphasising the uniqueness of the Japanese reminds us of *Nihonjin-ron* (theories about the Japanese), which will be reviewed in section 2.5. Another situation he draws attention to is where a host family frequently presents a tea ceremony, calligraphy or flower arranging for their student after dinner. The student explains that she had experienced enough of that kind of stereotypical representation of Japanese culture prior to the homestay, and complains about being treated like a baby or pet in the family. Accordingly, Iino argues that the host families fabricate a supposedly "correct" and "authentic" Japanese culture to present to foreigners (1996, p. 234).

Iino's findings shed light on the behaviours displayed by Japanese host families, and his work is a valuable study of American students in Japanese homestays. However, we cannot simply rely on Iino's findings to understand the situation of Australian students in Japan. Even though Australian and American cultures share a language and are perceived as relatively similar, they are different cultures. Furthermore, as Olsen (2008) points out, the phenomenon of Australian university students in SA context is not well researched when compared with studies on Australia as a destination for international students (p. 364). Within the SA context, no study published to date has examined the intercultural experiences of Australian students in a short Japanese homestay context. Among the studies on Japanese homestay reviewed above, Hashimoto (1993) and Okazaki-Luff (1992) examine Australian Rotary exchange students' experiences. These students, however, were in Japan for a whole year. The length of stay is a crucial factor because it impacts on the relational dynamics differently. In terms of relationship building, for example, it may affect the extent to which students are treated as family members or guests, a factor emphasised by participants as discussed in section 2.3.1. The timeframe may also change the way both students and host families deal with problematic situations and the adaptation to new environments.

Considering that homestay is commonly integrated into short language and culture programs to Japan, the phenomenon of short-term homestay deserves further investigation to deepen our understanding about how the experiences are shaped. Japan was one of the top 12 destination countries for international study experiences among Australian students in 2011 (Olsen, 2012, p. 19). The precise number of Australian students who stay with Japanese host families is not readily available, but short programs to Japan such as those examined in the present study are popular and likely to remain so. The present project examines homestay programs organised by two universities. One of these has been sending 15 students annually since 1988 and the other university has sent six students each year in their program since 1996. Similar intensive language and culture programs in Japan are offered to students in other Australian universities that teach Japanese.[4] Thus, short SA programs that include homestay play an important part in learning Japanese for Australian students and the insights gained from the present thesis will have pedagogical applications, enabling teachers to better prepare future participants.

[4] Of the 39 universities in Australia, Japanese language is offered in 34 universities (Retrieved 23 September 2013 from http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/page/australia-s-universities/). Based on the information accessible from the respective SA websites, 19 universities offer short-term Japanese language and culture programs, of which nine incorporate homestay.

2.5 Discourses shaping Japanese homestay

The literature about homestay reviewed so far in this chapter has given some insights into the intercultural experiences from students' and/or host families' perspectives. As mentioned earlier, the students' expectations of the homestay experience depend on their cultural origins, and similarly the host's cultural background necessarily shapes their expectations. Iino's studies (1996, 2006) highlight the way in which Japanese host families display particular behaviours towards their American students, implying certain assumptions about how foreigners should behave and what kinds of Japanese language and culture are appropriate to present to foreigners. This section discusses discourses and concepts that are influential in Japanese society and are therefore likely to inform the perceptions, assumptions and beliefs of Japanese host families with regard to visiting foreign students.

One such discourse is that of education for international understanding, which is related to the internationalisation of Japan (Sato, 2004). The discourse of internationalisation widely circulates in Japanese society, inspiring movements in various fields (Nukaga, 2003, p. 79) including educational reform (Kobayashi, 1986). As homestay is a cross-cultural educational phenomenon (Klepinger, 1995), usually organised by international centres for international students in universities, the discourse of internationalisation can affect the way host families form their assumptions with regard to their roles in relation to the students in their care. This section therefore reviews literature about education for international understanding and the discourse of internationalisation in Japanese education, particularly in higher education. As mentioned earlier, the way Japanese host families in Iino's study emphasise the uniqueness of Japanese culture reminds us of 日本人論 *Nihonjin-ron* (theories about the Japanese), hence research on this topic will also be reviewed. *Nihonjin-ron*, as we shall see, is considered to be an attempt to construct the parameters of a distinctive Japanese cultural and national identity (Befu, 1993; Yoshino, 1992). Such an attempt in turn generates a tendency to emphasise Japanese culture as being unique on one hand, while any other cultures are considered as different on the other. The idea of highlighting differences can be associated with the Japanese term 異文化 *ibunka* (different cultures). Hence, this term will also be reviewed.

The international organisation, UNESCO promoted international education worldwide and the history can be traced back to the beginning of formal education. UNESCO's terminology for this program has undergone several changes during 46 years of existence. In 1954, an expert committee recommended that the concept should be "education for international understanding and cooperation" (Arora, Koehler & Reich, 1994, p. 11). The concept has been adopted into Japanese education and called 国際理解教育 *Kokusai rikai kyōiku* (education for international understanding) (Sato, 2004, p. 210). According to Sato, education for international understanding was inspired by the UNESCO policy, but it has developed in a different direction in Japan from that originally advocated. Sato suggests that this may be related to how the notion of internationalisation has developed in Japan and how Japan's internationalisation has been influenced by its own interpretation of what it means to be international (p. 211). In what follows, the influence of the concept of internationalisation on Japanese educational reform, particularly in higher education, will be reviewed.

In the 1980s, vocabulary centred around the concept of "internationalisation" emerged, expressed in Japanese as 国際化 *kokusaika* (Goodman, 2007). In 1984, then Prime Minister Nakasone pledged to create *kokusai kokka nihon* (international country Japan). Through this 1984 mission, the notion of *kokusaika* was popularised in Japan, not only in official circles but in the wider society (Goodman, 2007, p. 84; Rivers, 2010, p. 443). Since then, a wide range of policies has been implemented to achieve this goal, including the learning of foreign languages, predominantly English, which has been a major thrust of the government's push for greater internationalisation of Japanese society (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 36). The initiatives are particularly prominent in the Japanese higher education system (Huang, 2006) although, as Kudo and Hashimoto (2011) point out, the interpretations and implementations of internationalisation among Japanese universities are not uniform, showing diversified approaches. The efforts of higher education for *kokusaika* are described as "a tool for acquisition of international recognition" (Yonezawa, 2010, p. 122) or to promote "national interests, serving to reinforce a past trend towards nationalism in education" (Kobayashi, 1986, p. 66). In essence, scholars argue that *kokusaika* is not necessarily about changing Japan, or understanding other cultures through intercultural communication; rather, it is aimed at enhancing the internationalised image of Japan.

Since the 1980s, the efforts to internationalise Japanese higher education have been reflected in major government programs that aim to diversify university campuses. One key movement has been a push to bring in more foreign students. In 1983, then Prime Minister Nakasone set the target of bringing 100,000 foreign students to Japan as the first step to internationalising Japanese higher education. After this goal was reached in 2003, a new plan was announced in 2008 to further increase the number to 300,000 by 2020. It is questionable whether simply increasing the number of foreign students promotes internationalisation in Japan. Indeed, these policies are criticised for making its orientation nebulous (Yonezawa, 2010, p. 134). As Horie (2002) contends, what matters is not just the number of international students studying in Japan, but that there should be a basic philosophy which should embrace students from various backgrounds in Japanese higher education. Burgess, Gibson, Klaphake and Selzer (2010) view the *kokusaika* movement as caught between push and pull factors. A push factor is acknowledging the necessity of embracing global trends while a pull factor is a desire to protect and strengthen the Japanese national identity in the face of foreign pressure (p. 471). The point about strengthening the Japanese national identity is also underscored by Hashimoto (2000). Hashimoto contends that the promotion of internationalisation represents a surreptitious way of reinforcing a sense of Japaneseness through illustrating difference, and is thus aimed at encouraging Japanese citizens to reassert their collective Japanese identity (p. 45). Hence, Japanese nationalism underlies the move to internationalise Japan. The paradox may arise because, as McVeigh (2002) puts it, "the best method to downplay nationalism is to incessantly speak of and simulate its opposite - internationalism" (p. 149).

The nationalistic view is also related to *Nihonjin-ron*, which refers to "study or discussion of the nature of Japanese culture, society and national character" (Sato, 2004, p. 212). Dale (1986) defines *Nihonjin-ron* as "discussions of Japanese identity" (p. 119) since identity is at the core (Befu, 2001, p. 119). Hundreds of books and articles, both academic and popular, have been published in this genre that aims to identify the essence of Japaneseness. According to Yoshino (1992), *Nihonjin-ron* attempts to explore and reconstruct a national identity seen as threatened by Westernization and rapid industrialisation (p. 186). These theories do not necessarily represent empirical reality, but rather images created to reinforce the Japanese identity (p. 12). Nevertheless, these *Nihonjin-ron* works created and reinforced a folk belief among many Japanese people that Japan and the Japanese are unique and different from the rest of the world (Sugimoto, 1999). In essence, the theories build on the attribution of special properties to the Japanese brain, social customs and language (Maher & Yashiro,

1995), and the assumption that all Japanese share these particular attributes regardless of their class, gender, occupation and other variables. Hence, this is a striking phenomenon of overgeneralising Japanese characteristics as a nation (cf. Sugimoto, 2010, pp. 189-218). Several researchers have found that these ideas, which reinforce stereotypical views of Japaneseness, have penetrated widely among the general Japanese population. Yoshino (1992), through his interview data, finds that the idea of Japanese uniqueness, which was introduced by intellectuals, is widely accepted by businessmen and school principals. Furthermore, teaching Japanese as a foreign language as well as foreign language learning for Japanese is also affected by *Nihonjin-ron* discourse (Kubota, 2002; Liddicoat, 2007). As Kubota (2002) contends, the conception and presentation of Japanese culture mirror *Nihonjin-ron* discourse in both Japanese classrooms and teacher training, by accentuating the uniqueness of essentialised Japanese culture (pp. 24-25). According to Liddicoat (2007), in Japanese language-in-education policy, foreign language learning is seen as a vehicle for the expression of Japaneseness through other languages rather than as a way of mediating between Japanese and other perspectives (p. 37). One motivation for paying attention to Japanese uniqueness was to promote better communication between Japanese and non-Japanese, as the peculiarities of Japanese character are assumed to be barriers to intercultural understanding. As Yoshino argues, however, these efforts somehow resulted in emphasising the difference to the extent that commonality between the Japanese and non-Japanese was forgotten (1992, p. 38).

Related to the highlighting of difference is the use of the term *ibunka*. *Ibunka* is a word that combines the Chinese characters for 異 "different" and 文化 "culture," to literally mean "different culture(s)." As Burgess (2004) points out, in contrast with the notion of *kokusaika*, which has attracted considerable criticism, *ibunka*, which emerged during the mid-1980s during the *kokusaika* boom, has received very little critical analysis. Yet it is arguably a problematic term that reinforces the otherness of cultures that are not classified as Japanese culture. A curious aspect of this term is that it has become established as a label to refer collectively to any foreign culture. For instance, to translate "intercultural communication," "*ibunka* communication" is more commonly used than "*ibunka-kan* communication." The former literally denotes "different culture communication" while the latter "communication between different cultures." Even though the latter reflects the meaning of "intercultural" more accurately, the former is ubiquitous. What this term implies is a clear division between

Japanese and other cultures. Thus, as Burgess (2004) notes, *ibunka* can be described as sophisticated vocabulary that functions to maintain the idea of a unique, homogeneous Japanese identity.

As reviewed above, the literature suggests that the *kokusaika* discourse widely circulates in the Japanese higher education context, resulting in efforts to internationalise on Japan's own terms. Simultaneously, *Nihonjin-ron* discourse penetrates, influencing educational policies, classrooms and individuals. In essence, a situation has been generated in which a particular understanding of Japan and of Japanese culture and values as uniquely different from the rest of the world is promoted. As Japanese homestays are organised as a part of international exchanges in universities, it is possible that self-selecting Japanese host families are consciously or unconsciously influenced by these pervasive ideas. They may see themselves as a part of the prestigious process of helping Japan to be internationalised. In other words, the discourse may well shape the assumptions and expectations of Japanese host families regarding their roles and their students' behaviours.

2.6 Chapter conclusion and research question

The present project is situated in the field of intercultural communication studies, which promotes effective and appropriate communication and interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds. SA is potentially an opportunity to help language learners to move towards this goal. If learners are inadequately prepared for their intercultural encounters, however, the experience risks reinforcing prejudices and stereotypical views. In order to consider adequate preparation, it is essential first to understand the contextually specific nature of intercultural communication. This is where the present thesis makes a contribution. Understanding what it means to be effective and appropriate in Japanese homestay, and what may be causing the students to form certain perceptions about Japanese culture, will be helpful for future students to prepare for their intercultural encounters.

The review of homestay studies underscores the fact that the nature of homestay varies widely and cannot be generalised. This is because students' and host families' assumptions, expectations and experiences depend on many variables including the nexus between host countries and students' countries of origin and their demographic profiles. Hence, we need to focus on a particular context involving particular groups of people to enhance understanding

of intercultural experiences. To understand the experience of Australian university students undertaking short-term homestay in Japan, the focus needs to be placed specifically on the combination of cultures in question.

The review of Japanese homestay studies suggests that Japanese host families display particular attitudes and behaviours entailing certain assumptions and expectations about their roles and what homestay experience should be like. These may not necessarily coincide with those exhibited by host families in other countries reviewed in 2.3. Japanese host families' assumptions and expectations are likely to be informed by the discourses surrounding *kokusaika* and *Nihonjin-ron* that circulate in Japanese society - discourses that affect what Japanese host families might perceive as their roles for the students in their care.

Although some existing studies examine homestay experiences from both students' and host families' perspectives, many examine the phenomenon primarily based on the students' perceptions. As intercultural encounters involve both the students and host families, comparing and contrasting similarities and differences between both groups in the interpretations of intercultural experiences can enhance the understanding of the possible cause of any misunderstanding and/or conflicts. For this reason, the present project will give equal weight to examining how the experiences are perceived by students and host families. Given the fact that homestay is an important component of the Japanese short SA programs for Australian university students, enhancing the understanding of the nature of the intercultural experiences entailed will enable educators to better prepare future student participants. The present study will contribute through its detailed analysis of both groups of participants' perceptions of this specific homestay context.

The overarching research question of the present project can be encapsulated as follows:

How does the particular context of Japanese short-term homestay shape the intercultural communication and relational dynamics between students from Australian universities and their host families and their intercultural experience?

This entails investigation of three sub-questions:

1. What kinds of expectations do the participants bring to the short homestay, and to what extent are these fulfilled?
2. What effect does the short homestay context have on the kinds of roles and relationships possible for students and host families?
3. How does the international exchange aspect of homestay shape expectations in relation to the teaching and learning experience?

These questions guide the elaboration of the methodology and the analysis of the data throughout the thesis.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In reiterating my main research question and three sub-questions:

How does the particular context of Japanese short-term homestay shape the intercultural communication and relational dynamics between students from Australian universities and their host families and their intercultural experience?

Sub-questions:

1. What kinds of expectations do the participants bring to the short homestay, and to what extent are these fulfilled?
2. What effect does the short homestay context have on the kinds of roles and relationships possible for students and host families?
3. How does the international exchange aspect of homestay shape expectations in relation to the teaching and learning experience?

This chapter describes the research design, recruitment procedures, participants, data collection, the author's background as a researcher and ethical protection of the participants.

3.2 Qualitative approach: Rationale

The present study concerns intercultural experiences reported by undergraduate students and Japanese families who host such students during short homestays in Japan. It explores the individual's account of personal intercultural experience of both students and host family members; therefore, a qualitative approach is deemed appropriate. The following outlines the characteristics of the approach to explain the reasons why a qualitative approach suits this study.

Silverman (2005) argues that no research method, quantitative or qualitative, is intrinsically better than any other (p. 6). Emphasis should not be on the legitimacy of qualitative research methodology viewed through the lens of quantitative research, but rather on the most

appropriate method for the research problem being investigated. As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) put it, although both qualitative and quantitative researchers are concerned with the individual's point of view, "qualitative investigators think they can get closer to the actor's perspective through detailed interviewing and observation" (p. 10) as qualitative research is "concerned with understanding human behaviour from the actor's own frame of reference" (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p. 12). It is conducted through analysis of specific cases or phenomena with in-depth inquiry, and comprises rich, detailed description with evidence in the form of direct quotations (Creswell & Maietta, 2002, p. 143). Therefore, a qualitative research approach is more appropriate if the given research is "exploratory or descriptive and stresses the importance of context, setting, and participants' frames of reference" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 54). As the present study describes a phenomenon which occurs within Japanese short homestays, a qualitative approach is considered appropriate.

Within a qualitative research approach, some studies in the fields of cross-cultural phenomenon adopt an ethnographic focus that emphasises the role of the researcher as participant observer (e.g., Iino, 1996, 2006). By contrast, phenomenological studies focus specifically on the actual, lived experiences of a small number of participants in relation to a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Maietta, 2002, p. 151). Phenomenology aims to "produce clear and accurate descriptions of a particular aspect of human experience" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 44) and thus, it focuses on how participants make sense of what they experience and how they interpret these experiences and their world. The aim of phenomenological studies is to explore the phenomenon rather than take a critical stance. These characteristics of phenomenological studies apply to the present study. The study attempts to understand how both students and Japanese host families make sense of their intercultural communications and other aspects of daily lives together during short homestays. Through in-depth qualitative analysis into the intercultural experiences both from students' and host parents' perspectives, the study aims to identify factors that influence a positive or negative intercultural experience in short Japanese homestays by Australian undergraduate students.

3.3 Methods for data collection

There are four major methods of data collection for qualitative researchers: 1) gathering texts and documents; 2) conducting interviews; 3) recording and transcribing interaction; and 4) observation (Silverman, 2001). Qualitative researchers commonly use multiple data collection methods for triangulation in order to enhance the validity of research by confirming and testing emerging findings.

Recording and transcribing interaction between host families and homestay students and observation of homestay interaction were deemed inappropriate to this project because they would not provide data that would answer my research questions on their perceptions on homestay experience. Besides, as Patton argues, "the fact is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time" (2002, p. 341). Therefore, in the search for rich qualitative data, I combined the first two methods: collecting text obtained in the form of learner journals and conducting individual interviews.

3.3.1 Diaries / Journals

From journal entries, I expected to gain two kinds of benefits: firstly, to identify issues that are not covered in the interview guides so that they can be clarified in the interview and secondly, to increase the chance of capturing students' fresh memories about their experiences. These students left homestay before Christmas in 2009 (December 12 for one group and 23rd for the other), but it was late January or February when most interviews were organised because of the long holiday. With this time interval, it is more likely that memories fade. Therefore, a student's journal complements data gained from interviews.

The terminology of "diaries" or "journals" seems interchangeable in the context of recording study abroad experiences. Whatever it is called, it can be used as a valuable research instrument to convert study abroad students' experiences and thoughts into tangible forms. Researchers may provide detailed or very little instruction on what to write in implementing the journal writing task. For example, Jackson (2006) instructs her Hong Kong students to write about a wide range of topics while they are in England. Jackson's instructions are to record the students' observations and reactions to each day's activities, including their homestay experience, excursions and English lessons. The students are further instructed to

describe confusing or disturbing intercultural experiences as well as encounters that are particularly rewarding (p. 140). In contrast, Pearson-Evans (2006) hardly provides any instruction on what to write to her Irish students who go to Japan for a one-year program. Pearson-Evans asks her participants to keep regular diaries about their cross-cultural experiences in whatever form they wish. The rationale behind not specifying a particular structure or a set of questions is explained as being "to minimise the researcher's influence on the students' thinking" and to collect raw data that are "as natural and reflective as possible" (p. 57). The problem is the low collection rate. Although 21 students have agreed to keep the diary, Pearson-Evans ends up with only six diaries. The low collection rate underscores potential problems in students' commitments. Reflecting on the experience, Pearson-Evans raises four points to potentially improve the data collection. They are a close personal working relationship between the researcher and the participants, clear specific instructions on what to write, a shorter-time frame and providing diary notebooks.

Bearing these issues in mind, the task was deemed to be reasonable for my project covering two to three week homestays. I provided my student participants with a B5 size notebook with a hard cover to encourage them to do it. In the information sheet about the research project, I asked them to record in the notebook any events they felt interesting, puzzling, strange, annoying, amazing or otherwise significant in communication with the Japanese in the homestay context. Further, when I met the participants for a 30-minute briefing about the research project, I clarified about the frequency of entries, length and language for writing a journal. The students were asked to write about any events, observations and thoughts about their homestay experiences every day if possible, or at least every few days in retrospect. No particular request was made about the length. English was nominated because they would express their thoughts more accurately. However, I commented that they could write some Japanese words and sentences where they wish to. When I thanked the participants for their cooperation, three out of six students said that they had intended to keep a diary in Japan. Further, another three students commented that recording their in-country experience would be beneficial for them.

Keeping the journal is meaningful for students as it enhances their learning opportunities in the study abroad context. On the other hand, the same task cannot be imposed on the host families because they are not travellers overseas. They live their normal life at home and there is no particular reason to keep such records unless they usually have the habit of

keeping a diary. Therefore, it was considered inappropriate to ask the host families to keep a journal.

3.3.2 Interviews

The interview is an important data collection tool across the spectrum of qualitative research. It is a widely used technique for generating information in research dealing with personal experiences and perspectives (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, 2004). The purpose of the interview is to understand both "the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 1991, p. 3). Interviews give researchers access to people's lived experiences with the view that the meanings people attach to their experiences "affect the way they carry out that experience" (Seidman, 1991, p. 4). It is their understanding of the meaning rather than the global truth.

Holstein & Gubrium (1997) contend that an interviewer tries to "activate the respondent's stock of knowledge" and "bring it to bear on the discussion at hand in ways that are appropriate to the research agenda" (p. 123). They propose to see the respondents as active constructors of meaning, who are incited by the interviewer to develop meaningful stories about their life, rather than as "vessel[s] of answers."

Denzin (1970) contends that there are three reasons to prefer an open-ended interview:

1. it allows respondents to use their unique ways of defining the world;
2. it assumes that no fixed sequence of questions is suitable to all respondents;
3. it allows respondents to "raise important issues not contained in the schedule." (p. 125)

Nevertheless, there are problems with interviews. A common concern is that participants may not be wholly open or truthful. Addressing this problem, Silverman (2001) argues that "[W]e need not hear interview responses simply as true or false reports on reality. Instead, we can treat such responses as *displays* [original emphasis] of perspectives and moral forms" (p. 111). Accordingly, regardless of whether the information interviewees provide is true, their

responses can still be treated as representations of their perspectives of the reality under investigation.

There are three basic approaches to open-ended interviews: The informal conversational interview, the standardized open-ended interview and the general interview guide approach (Patton, 2002, p. 342). The first approach is also called "unstructured interviews" and is sometimes referred to as "ethnographic interviews." It offers maximum flexibility and typically occurs as a part of ongoing participant observation fieldwork. The second type consists of a carefully worded and arranged set of questions to ask each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words. It is also called "structured interviews." The third general interview guide approach involves listing a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent. The guide is prepared to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued, but it allows flexibility in wording questions spontaneously and establishing a conversational style (Patton, 2002, p. 343). In other words, the guide helps the interviewer to focus on the crucial issues of the study without pre-determining the limits and nature of a phenomenon. It is also called "semi-structured interviews."

Out of these possibilities, the third approach, "semi-structured interviews," was considered most suited to my study. My interest is to explore how intercultural experiences are perceived by the participants in the short homestay context. Therefore, while I had a specific set of questions to guide the interview, flexibility was also needed to be able to modify responses and/or add further questions depending on the responses from the interviewees (see Appendix B for the interview guide).

With regard to the number of people involved in an interview, apart from individual interviews, focus groups have been used in other studies on intercultural and cross-cultural issues (e.g., Richardson, 2003). The focus group has its advantages: people who went through similar experiences may stimulate the thoughts and opinions of others in the group. However, based on my experience with the focus group formats (Parry, 2006), three concerns emerged. The first one is the practical difficulty of finding a mutually convenient time and suitable venue for multiple people. The second is potential difficulties in controlling the proportion of talking time between talkative and less talkative participants. As the former tend to dominate the talk, they may adversely affect other participants' opportunities to express their views. The third is that some issues may be too sensitive to be brought up in the focus group. In fact,

I was approached by past participants to talk in private after the group debriefing session so that fellow students would not hear their negative experiences. For these reasons, I considered in-depth, open-ended individual interviews within a general interview guide approach to be better suited to both students and host families in my study.

Regarding the choice of interviewer, there are three basic scenarios: either the researcher alone, or with another interviewer, or someone else such as a research assistant. It is a crucial variable, because as Riessman (1993) points out, the story is being told to particular people and it might have taken a different form with someone else as the listener (p. 11). Depending on the listener, the responders may "produce the kind of responses they think the interviewer wishes to hear" (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p. 161). Miller & Glassner further emphasise the importance of who the interviewer is by elaborating the following point:

> The issue of how interviewees respond to us based on who we are - in their lives, as well as the social categories to which we belong, such as age, gender, class, and race - is a practical concern as well as an epistemological or theoretical one. The issue may be exacerbated, for example, when we study groups with whom we do not share membership. Particularly as a result of social distances, interviewees may not trust us, they may not understand our questions, or they may purposefully mislead us in their responses (2004, pp. 127-128).

This point can be put in a different way. The interviewer's background knowledge and experience are invaluable resources for assisting respondents to explore and describe their actions, feelings and reactions or experiences (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). Each researcher brings expertise and cultural background to the study in the search for appropriate answers to the research questions (Shibusawa & Lukens, 2004). Because I conducted the interviews myself as a researcher, it is essential to explain how suited or possibly unsuited I can be as the interviewer in the context of this study. I address this point in the following section.

3.3.2.1 The researcher's background

My personal and professional backgrounds make me well-equipped to conduct this study. At the same time, I am aware of the possible drawbacks to my interviewing the participants.

I am a native speaker of Japanese, and fluent in both English and Japanese. This enables direct access to information provided by the participants in their first language without it being filtered by an interpreter or translator. Intercultural communication has also been a major part of my life experience. I have been in the position of both host student and host parent in homestay in the past. Although I have been a permanent resident in Australia for almost 20 years, I visit Japan every second year to see family and friends. Hence, I have sufficient knowledge and familiarity with both Australian and Japanese contemporary cultures.

As I discussed earlier, interviewees may respond differently based on who the interviewers are. On this point, I acknowledge that being native Japanese and a Japanese teacher at the student participants' universities has both advantages and disadvantages for the two groups of participants. For homestay families, it is advantageous as they are likely to view the researcher as a person who shares Japanese cultural knowledge and assumption. In fact, a few host parents indicated such views during the interviews by the use of expressions such as "we Japanese think that way, don't we?" It is feared that it may have a negative influence on the students' responses as they may not want to criticise Japan or the Japanese to a Japanese person. While they were not in my Japanese classes at the time of conducting the research, I may teach them in the future. I am aware that the students may not fully disclose their negative opinions. Nevertheless, in my past studies on short exchange programs to Japan, the students certainly have shared both positive and negative stories. When I facilitated post-trip debriefing group discussions at one of the universities between 2004 and 2008, a number of students revealed both their positive and negative observations of Japanese culture and people. Therefore, although I acknowledge potential disadvantageous elements, I have advantageous qualities as a suitable researcher to conduct the present study.

3.4 Recruitment method, gatekeepers and participants

Participants were recruited from two distinct groups: firstly, students from two universities in Australia who participated in short exchange programs during November and December 2009 that included homestay with Japanese families, and secondly, the Japanese host families who hosted these students. I obtained permission for the data collection from two sets of

gatekeepers: the exchange coordinators at both universities and Japanese chief administration officers at their respective Japanese sister universities. Altogether, 10 Japanese host parents from nine families and nine students from the two Australian universities voluntarily participated in this project.

3.4.1 Student participants

The undergraduate student participants were enrolled in Japanese subjects at the time of recruitment and data collection. Each university offers separate exchange programs for interested students to go on a three to four week program from the end of November each year. One partner university is located in Tokyo. On the other hand, the other partner university is located in Hyogo prefecture, about 10 minutes by train from Osaka city. There were 15 participants in one program and five in the other program in 2009. Although both programs offer homestay, the duration is slightly different. The stay in the university in Tokyo is for two weeks with one family (November 28 - December 12), whereas the stay near Osaka is three weeks involving two families (November 30 - December 23). The latter group of students had a main host family in the city area near the host university, but they stayed with another family for five days when they visited a country town located about five hours away by bus from the city.

In order to recruit participants for this research project, I first approached the two exchange coordinators. I emailed, requesting cooperation, with an attached information sheet that explained the aims and design of this research project. They kindly agreed and invited me to join their respective pre-departure meetings with the exchange students. I explained the project to the students orally and distributed an information sheet, consent sheet and self-addressed envelopes. Seven out of 20 students returned the consent forms to me. I emailed to thank them for their cooperation and then organised a 30-minute meeting. This was to explain further about the project, answer any questions and give them a notebook to use for their journal entries. Unfortunately, one participant had to cancel her trip two days before departure due to a sudden family illness. This left me with only six students. I sent follow-up emails in January 2010, to invite students who did not respond to my original invitation. An additional three students responded, indicating they were happy to be interviewed about their experiences. This made a total of nine student participants comprising two males and seven

females, aged from 18 to 21. Four students were from Japanese language classes I had taught in the previous semester. However, they were no longer my students at the time of the research and I had no involvement in their subsequent assessment.

3.4.1.1 Data collection from students

The student data sources were twofold: written journals and interviews.

Student participants were asked to keep a journal while on exchange. The instruction was to record their intercultural experiences, their observations and thoughts (or at least every few days in retrospect) in the notebook provided. They were to write down any events they felt interesting, puzzling, strange, annoying, amazing or otherwise significant about Japanese people and their experiences and communication with the Japanese. Initially, all seven students who agreed to participate in the project agreed to keep a journal. However, one cancelled the trip and one never kept a journal. Therefore, I collected journals from five participants. I photocopied four hand-written journals and returned the originals to the students. One student opted to type her journal on her laptop and she submitted it electronically. I read all the journal entries thoroughly and highlighted any sections that were prominent, unclear or needed elaboration. I also created notes to ask questions and seek clarification and elaboration during the interviews.

Individual semi-structured interviews were held in an office, meeting room or a classroom on the student's university campus in Australia between January and March 2010. There was a list of questions that guided the interview (see Appendix B). While I ensured all the questions were covered, the phrasing and ordering of these questions were slightly modified depending on the interviewee's responses and the conversational flow. For the five students who submitted journals, some additional questions were asked in relation to what they had written. At the beginning of each interview, I explained that they could speak in English, but they were also welcome to switch to Japanese if they wished to. These interviews were conducted in English with some sporadic use of Japanese words, phrases and sentences. All the interviews were recorded on a digital MP3 voice recorder with consent from the participants and transcribed by the interviewer. The recorded interviews ranged in length from 23 minutes 54 seconds to 40 minutes 5 seconds. Although all the questions on the interview guide were

covered with slightly modified expressions for all the participants, some were more talkative than the others. One participant provided many details of her experience and thoughts in narrative-style talk. By contrast, another tended to provide much shorter responses. The wide range of interview times is attributable to such individual differences.

3.4.2 Host families

The recruitment for Japanese host family participants also passed through two sets of gatekeepers. These were the Japanese chief administration officers in charge of organising the homestays and the two exchange coordinators at the Australian universities who forwarded my email (with the information sheet as an attachment) to their Japanese counterparts requesting their cooperation. The officers explained my project to all the host families at their orientation meetings. Out of 20 families, nine returned the consent forms to the gatekeepers, which were forwarded to me by mail. I then contacted these participants to thank them for their cooperation and to arrange a mutually convenient place, time and date for interviews. Only one host parent per family participated in the interview except for one case. Of the nine families, in only one family, both husband and wife participated in the interview, which made the total number of host parent participants ten. They comprise two men and eight women, aged from 38 to 68.

3.4.2.1 Data collection from host families

The data were collected from in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews. They were all one-on-one interviews except for one family where both husband and wife participated. I travelled to Japan in February 2010 to conduct the interviews. This ten-day research trip was partially funded by the School of Languages and Cultures Postgraduate Research Support Scheme 2009. Only two interviews were conducted in a place other than the family home. One participant nominated a Japanese university office for the interview and the other her office in a kindergarten right across from their family home. All interviews were conducted in Japanese as it was the first language for both interviewees and interviewer. The recorded interviews ranged from 19 minutes 25 seconds to 48 minutes and 30 seconds. All the interviews were recorded on a digital MP3 voice recorder with consent from the participants and transcribed by the interviewer. Just as in the case of the student participants, some host

parents were more talkative than others and provided long narrative stories. Individual differences were observed and they are responsible for the wide range of interview times.

About a month after the interviews, two host mothers emailed additional comments that they felt they needed to add. These were included in the data set. I gave all the families a box of Australian chocolates to show appreciation for their time in accordance with Japanese customs.

3.4.3 Adequate number of participants

A question arises as to how many participants legitimate findings in qualitative studies. It does not require as high a number as for quantitative studies though the specific number is not necessarily spelled out in the literature. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) criticise the fact that very few specific guidelines are available as to how many interviews are enough in qualitative studies. After reviewing 24 research method books and seven databases, they contend that no existing recommendations can be generalised regarding actual sample sizes.

Nonetheless, there are a few reference points. For example, Bertaux (1981) argues that 15 is the smallest acceptable sample size in qualitative research. Morse (1994) recommends at least six participants for phenomenological studies and approximately 30 to 50 participants for ethnographies, grounded theory studies and ethno science studies (p. 225). According to Creswell (1998), the recommended numbers range quite widely. He nominates between five and 25 interviews for a phenomenological study depending on how thick and rich the data would be.

The present study has a total of 19 participants for the interview component and five for the journal component. This is within the range recommended by Creswell (1998) and exceeds the smallest acceptable sample size by Bertaux (1981). Therefore, given the qualitative way I analyse the data, the number is justifiable. Although I considered collecting a second data sample at the end of 2010 if the data were insufficient, it was not necessary.

3.5 Transcribing the interviews

Patton contends that, in transcribing the interview responses, it is imperative to have *verbatim* raw data for qualitative analysis (1990, p. 379). Any sample of unplanned spoken discourse includes a significant number of false starts, hesitations, repeated words and phrases and fillers like "well," "you know" and "like" (Cameron, 2001, p. 33). It is important to annotate these details as well as pauses and laughter to capture not only what participants said but the way they said it. There are some established conventions for rendering details of the vocal production of utterances in talk-in-interactions. Jefferson (1989, pp. 193-196) provides a wide variety of conventions to capture subtleties for conversation or discourse analysis. As the aim of my study is not conversation analysis, certain details are unnecessary. Hence, following Ten Have's advice to use the most commonly used conventions with minor individual variation (Ten Have, 2004, p. 183), I use only some of them (see list of conventions used in Appendix A).

3.5.1 Language issues

An issue is the language to use during the interview. Although the student participants are learners of Japanese, their proficiency level is beginner to lower intermediate levels. This is insufficiently proficient to be able to recount their intercultural experiences and feelings. Therefore, the interviews with the students were conducted in English; however, code-switching was encouraged, leading to some use of Japanese vocabulary and short phrases. The interviews with host families were conducted in Japanese as it is the native language for both the interviewer and interviewees. Therefore, about half my data set was obtained in Japanese, which required translation into English.

Rossman and Rallis pose three questions to consider about issue of foreign language data: the first is which language to use in the direct quotes; the second is the use of translated words as direct quotes; and the third is whether a translation accurately reflects the sense of the original language (2003, p. 260). In the present study, the bilingual researcher translates the original Japanese text into English in order to present the quotes in both Japanese and English. There are words that take on a very different meaning in other cultures and further some words and ideas simply cannot be translated directly (Patton, 2002, p. 392). A literal translation may sound awkward in English although changing the wording or expressions may distort the nuance or even meaning of the original message. In order to minimise such

risks, for some quotations I provide both the literal translation in brackets and the more natural expression when necessary and appropriate.

3.6 Ethical considerations for the participants

Ethical considerations are an important part of conducting the research. The author gained a permission to conduct research from the University of Queensland's Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee (BSSERC) in September 2009. All the potential participants were informed about the research purpose and what was required as participants in the information sheet, which was distributed via the gatekeepers. The participants were informed that they were able to withdraw from participation at any time.

All the information the participants provided through their journal entries and interviews is confidential. It has only been used for the research purpose of analysing the nature of intercultural communication in the homestay situation. Pseudonyms for participants are used in transcribing recorded interviews and also for the dissertation. The participants' names are replaced by numbers in the order of interviews preceded by S for the students and H for the host parents (e.g., S1, H1) so that participants will not be identifiable. Whenever a specific person's name was brought up in the data set, it was changed to a randomly selected Capital letter, unrelated to the real name. (e.g., "S" is used to replace "Mary.") The recorded interviews are stored as digital sound files in my personal computer, which requires my user name and password to gain access.

3.7 Analysis

As Patton (2002) contends, the lines between data collection and analysis are not absolutely clear in naturalistic inquiry due to its fluid and emergent nature (p. 436). This was certainly the case for my study. I first read the journals submitted by five student participants over and over to examine if there were any common topics, similar or different experiences and/or perceptions. While I was analysing the first data set, it was used as a preparation for rephrasing existing questions and adding new questions for interviews. During the interview phase, some topics emerged as prominent even before the transcription and the formal analysis process began. In addition, in transcribing the interview responses, recurring

adjectives, ideas, opinion and topics were already noticeable. Therefore, I was engaged in the analysis from the data collecting phase.

In order to analyse the data, various types of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software are available (see Patton, 2002, p. 442-447). I have considered if it may help my analysis process, but as Patton points out, while software may facilitate data storage, coding, retrieval and comparison, human beings do the analysis and decide what things go together to form a pattern (p. 442). The 18 interviews constitute a corpus that I considered manageable to analyse manually, hence I decided not to use any data analysis software.

I undertook a content analysis to discover any patterns or themes emerging in the data set. Content analysis refers to "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2002, p. 453). The core meanings are often called patterns (i.e. descriptive findings) or themes (i.e. categorical or topical forms). That is why they may be called respectively pattern analysis or theme analysis. I did "cross-case or cross-interview analysis" for each question in the interview (Patton, 1990, p. 376), searching for patterns and themes, and comparing and contrasting various incidents and the perceptions reported. I read and re-read the data to become immersed or "grounded" (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) in order to discover patterns, themes and categories inductively from the data.

3.8 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has described the present study as a phenomenological qualitative research. It has also presented detailed description of data collection instruments and how the participants were recruited from two distinctive groups through two sets of gatekeepers in Australia and Japan. The data collection procedures and methods of data analysis were also explained in detail.

Chapter 4. Building expectations about Study Abroad and short-term language programs in Japan: promotion and preliminary information

4.1 Introduction

Opportunities for students to study abroad are valued for fostering global citizenships and reflect the internationalisation efforts of Australian higher education. These are usually organised through exchange agreements so that students pay no extra fees to attend partner universities overseas. The value placed on such experiences is partly reflected in the establishment of the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) scheme in 1991 by the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC, now called Universities Australia). It aims at increasing the mobility of staff and students through reciprocal exchange arrangements and providing scholarships. Independently of UMAP, Australia's universities have established links with universities in other countries, and increasingly encourage their students to participate in the programs by benchmarking the number of participants (Olsen, 2008). According to the figure published by the Australian government, 97 % of tertiary institutions promote the importance of outbound mobility opportunities for students through their international strategies (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009b). The number of international study experiences undertaken by undergraduate students among 36 universities was equivalent to 12.3 % of domestic undergraduate completions in 2011. The figure shows a steady increase from 8.8 % in 2009 (Olsen, 2012).

This chapter scrutinizes how SA is presented to prospective participants in order to understand what kinds of impressions are generated. It begins with examining how Australian universities as sending institutions promote SA in general to prospective students and then narrows the focus to short-term intensive language programs as a type of SA which often features homestay accommodation. This section illustrates how the programs are presented, how commonly homestay is included and how it is described for students. After this analysis, the chapter looks into how the homestay concept is described and explained by Japanese host institutions to incoming students and their host families. The aim of the examination is to elucidate what kinds of information both parties receive as this can impact on participants' expectations about their homestay experience.

Although students may talk to other returning students, teachers and SA advising officers, the impressions from this readily accessible information can still build certain expectations as to what SA life will be like. Therefore, this chapter analyses how Australian universities publicly explain why students should study abroad. It also considers how these explanations and descriptions may influence students' expectations towards the experience of SA specific to the homestay context in Japan. Additionally, it examines the ideas about the homestay role and images of the intercultural encounter that feed into host families' expectations. Comparing the written information made available to both students and host families enables the identification of potential mismatches in their expectations that could influence their perceptions towards the actual intercultural experiences.

The sources for information from Australian universities are the official publications available from the websites of SA offices that manage the respective university's student mobility programs. The recruitment publications for host families produced by the SA offices in the Japanese host universities, i.e., the program advertisements for prospective students and homestay handbooks (one for students and the other for host families), are also examined.

4.2 Study Abroad as depicted by Australian universities

The number of Australian universities that clearly depict their commitment to internationalisation on their websites has increased since 2005. Currently, nearly all universities mention that their policies and practices have an international dimension. In addition, compared to 13 universities in 2005, all universities mention that their students have opportunities to study abroad or engage in exchange programs, and list "global citizenship" as a graduate attribute (Arkoudis, Baik, Marginson, & Cassidy, 2012, p. 7). Of the 39 universities in Australia,[5] I examined the SA websites of the Go8 group [6] (eight universities) and Australian technology network universities[7] (five universities). This is because the two universities which offer the short exchange programs studied in this project are members of these groups (see Appendix C for the list of websites and the codes). I examined how the

[5] Retrieved 16 March 2012 from http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/page/australia-s-universities/

[6] The Group of Eight (Go8) is a coalition of leading research-intensive Australian universities. (see http://www.go8.edu.au/ for more information.)

[7] All five Australian technology network (ATN) universities derive at least in part from former Institutes of Technology. The ATN has strong focus on strategic partnerships with the community, industry and business. (see http://www.atn.edu.au/index.htm for more information.)

concept of SA and the reasons for participation are explained to students, paying attention to the language used in these official publications. Eleven universities publish student testimonials. Additionally, three of the universities make video clip testimonials available online. These testimonials and the accompanying photos are examined to consider the impressions that students may receive about what it is like to go on SA. I also looked at the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to see what kinds of questions are common and how the answers are handled.

4.2.1 Study Abroad as a tourism experience

Universities from both groups offer one or two semester programs as well as shorter programs.[8] Apart from providing practical information to students (e.g., eligibility, how SA works, and how to apply), these publications vigorously promote SA to students. Despite the different institutional characteristics of these two groups (research-intensive versus industry and business focus), there are few differences in the way they advertise SA. These publications show similarities in the type of photos published, which often highlight travel elements offered in SA. These travel opportunities are indeed explicitly conveyed to prospective students as shown by the examples in Table 1.

Table 1: Examples of highlighting travel on Australian university SA websites

Selected photos	• students jumping with arms outstretched in front of ancient monuments (D) • exquisite landscapes, typical tourist activities and/or famous landmarks (e.g., temples, Eiffel Tower, Tokyo Tower, the Great Wall of China and famous lakes) (A, B, C, D, F, H, J, K, L, M) • shots taken in the snow (A, B, C, D, F, H, J, K, L, M)
SA promoted as an opportunity to travel	• Through these experiences students (…) learn new life skills and grow personally (…) And all of this while travelling and exploring the world. (D) • Explore your host country and surrounding countries during semester breaks and after your exchange (F)

[8] The offerings for a variety of short programs are found in all except for one university, M.

	• You'll be able to travel within the host country and further afield with local students or other international students. (I) • Explore new and exciting places (J) • In most cases, exchange will allow you to combine travel and study without adding extra time to your studies. (M)
Student testimonials about travel	• I would highly recommend going on all the trips that are available to you. All of these trips are by boat cruise and are loads of fun because lots of students participate in the cruises so it turns into one massive floating party house. (C) • Exchange allowed me to explore, travel, and immerse myself in a new culture and country. I had an incredible semester and met people I know I will be friends with for life. It lived up to every expectation I had. (D) • What was the best part of your exchange experience? Definitely the travelling. It was just a lot of fun travelling and meeting up with friends to travel […] Just tried to travel every weekend. Loved that side of it. (E)[9] • While I was in Germany it was quite easy to have a weekend trip to Prague, Berlin or Freiburg as well as ski weekends […] I went to eighteen different countries during my time studying overseas. (F) • Put your travel boots on and get ready for the ride of your life! (M)

Five universities had downloadable SA brochures available from their websites so these were analysed for quantity and types of featured photos. Out of a total 83 photos,[10] for example, 66 (about 80 %) feature exquisite landscapes, typical tourist activities or famous landmarks, or a snowy background either with or without students. These photos often feature young adult students who pose on their own or with fellow students of about the same age. They also feature famous tourist sites that resemble those in commercial traveller guide books. Through these images and explicit reference to "travel" in the text, SA is pitched as tourism.

On the other hand, a claim is made elsewhere that SA offers a unique experience that enables students to immerse themselves in a new culture. Although tourists can experience limited

[9] This testimonial is available as a response to the interviewer in a video clip.
[10] University D: 6 out of 7; F: 27 out of 30; H: 4 out of 7; L: 7 out of 12; M: 22 out of 27.

aspects of a country firsthand, typically they do not immerse themselves in the culture visited. Hence, the following examples of excerpts distinguish between going on SA and travelling as a tourist:

- Immerse yourself in a foreign country. (C)

- Study abroad; immerse yourself in another culture, experience life with a different flavour. (H)

- Going on student exchange isn't just travelling as a tourist; it's living in a new country with a new culture. (G)

- An exchange is an opportunity to experience a new country, to meet new people, to become a local over the other side of the world, and all of this whilst completing a degree! (A, student testimonial, my emphasis)

- I wanted to experience a culture from a different perspective than as a traveller. (M, student testimonial)

Being a traveller/tourist implies that a student remains an outsider to some extent, whereas becoming a resident allows one to become a temporary insider. Depending on which one of these statuses is assumed in a new country, there is an implication for different degrees of cultural adjustment. Experience as a traveller may need less cultural adjustment whereas becoming a resident would require adjusting oneself more to the new cultural milieu. Hence, there is a tension between the emphasis on travel and the claimed opportunity for students to become a part of the host country as a temporary resident.

Travel elements are highlighted not only in the photos but in student testimonials, which are accessible from most universities' websites (11 out of 13). These testimonials describe students' SA experiences and provide advice for future participants based on their experiences. The topics include practical tips for living (general cost, food, accommodation and transport), subject choices and social life opportunities. In these testimonials, any downsides to SA are largely absent. Although there are occasional comments on initial problems, these are described as somehow being resolved with time. Persuasive contents are unsurprising given the promotional nature of these publications. Nonetheless, what is prominent is the ubiquitousness of the comments on enjoying the travel. Table 1 shows a small representative sample of such commentary. The number of testimonials varies

depending on the university, ranging from only two to more than 100. Five universities' websites published a typical number of 10 to 20 testimonials so the 73 testimonials from these sites were analysed further. As many as 54 of these 73 testimonials (about 74 %) include commentary on how much the students enjoyed various side trips during SA.[11] These personal accounts often give the impression that every weekend was spent travelling around. Therefore, a tension emerges again between a student's identity as a traveller and as a resident.

In summary, the extent to which SA publications emphasise the travel element portrays the student as a tourist. Even though it may attract students' interest to take up the opportunity, it gives its audience the strong impression that SA predominantly consists of joyful travel experiences. This image of SA as travelling and exploring the world could overshadow other aspects of SA such as living as a local and studying as an exchange student.

4.2.2 Benefits of Study Abroad

All universities show similarities in the way they assume improved foreign language skills and cross-cultural understanding from SA. They are also similar in claiming new friendships and career advantages as SA benefits. Although these claims may be effective in attracting students' interest, the publications create the impression that the benefits flow uniformly irrespective of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in diverse destination choices. Simultaneously, some contradictory messages about language learning deserve attention. Table 2 shows sample statements on language and culture learning as claimed benefits of SA.

Table 2: Sample statements on university websites claiming language and culture learning benefits of SA

Category	Excerpts
Claiming SA benefits of both language and culture learning	• Students experience an improvement in their language skills and cross-cultural understanding. (A) • Through the program, you can improve language skills, cross-cultural understanding, and cross-cultural and interpersonal communication. (D) • Improve your foreign language skills or learn a new language […] Immerse yourself in a new culture. (F)

[11] A: 18 out of 22, C: 14 out of 19, F: 11 out of 14, H: 6 out of 10, J: 5 out of 8

	• Learn or develop your language skills. Strengthen your cultural ties. (J) • Experience new customs and cultures. Improve language skills and intercultural communication skills. (K) • Expand your cultural horizons. Learn a new language. (M)

Language and culture learning is presented in these sample statements as though it is a universal benefit of SA. However, destination choices abound, with these universities each having exchange agreements with more than 100 partner universities in between 20 to 40 countries. This wide choice of host countries means that the languages and cultures of possible destinations vary immensely. Australian mainstream culture may be relatively similar to American or Canadian cultures, though it can be considered dissimilar from many cultures in Asian countries. As for the language, there are both English-speaking and non-English speaking countries. The fact is that English-speaking countries like the UK, USA and Canada are popular destinations for Australian students (Olsen, 2008, p. 372). These host countries would offer significantly different cultural and linguistic experiences from SA in many European or Asian non-English speaking countries. Australian students who study abroad in the UK, for example, would not benefit from foreign language immersion. Therefore, although spending time abroad can be a great opportunity to learn and/or improve a foreign language, this is not a natural consequence. Not only does it require choosing the most appropriate country and institution for the particular student, but his or her commitment and conscious efforts are equally essential. Nonetheless, these points seem absent in the publications.

When so many possible destinations are available to choose from, making the decision is not a simple task. Various factors need to be considered in choosing the most appropriate country and institution for the individual. It involves taking account of the culture and language of the host country, availability of adequate subjects and personal interests amongst other factors. Students need to research by consulting the information available from websites of home and host institutions, exchange advisers and/or returned students. The same destination is not necessarily suitable for all students, hence destination matters. Nevertheless, a contradictory message is noted. A student in a video clip enthusiastically states “Don't hesitate to go, it doesn't matter where you go, wherever you go, you'll have a great time and it will change

your life" (E). Another testimonial says, "Don't think too much. Just choose a place and go!" (M). These potentially convey the message that students will experience the same kinds of benefits irrespective of destination. In reality, however, depending on the destination, SA participants' cultural and linguistic experiences will be shaped differently. Therefore, an issue is that it does not emphasise the cultural specificity of the destination, ignoring the fact that you have to behave differently depending on the culture/destination. Students may get information to some extent from textbooks, teachers, friends and mass media, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider influences from every possible source.

Most universities (11 out of 13) refer to the improvement of language skills as a benefit of SA. However, while no institutions discourage learning a foreign language during SA, they are a little ambivalent about encouragement. Thus, students may receive two contradictory messages. On the one hand, they may gain the impression that linguistic improvement is available regardless of the destination, reinforcing the point that it somehow happens. On the other hand, the message is conveyed that it is not essential to know the language of the particular country, which weakens the message that encourages viewing the time abroad as a language learning opportunity. This is particularly notable in the way the answers are formulated in Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Samples to illustrate the degree of encouragement for language learning during SA on university websites

Category	Excerpts
Encouraging foreign language learning	Learn a new language. Choose a university in a non-English speaking country to improve your language skills, as some institutions only offer a small range of subjects in English. (C) You may find that exchange is an opportunity to improve rapidly at a foreign language (depending on where you go), because of both everyday exposure and intensive language programs which are offered. (I)
Only partially encouraging for foreign language learning	Do I need to speak a foreign language? No, but overseas study can be a great way to learn one. Almost all our exchange partner universities either teach in English or offer a large number of subjects taught in English […] All the short term programs are taught in English (except for some in-country language programs). That said, you will get a lot more out of living in a foreign country if you learn at least the basics of the language. (E) Do I need to be able to speak another language?

	Not necessarily as most partner institutions teach in English or offer a number of courses taught in English. However, if you choose a program that instructs in a foreign language, you will be expected to have an intermediate to advanced level of fluency […] There are some programs that instruct in a combination of English and a foreign language, e.g. in Japan, Korea, France, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Malaysia. (H) Must I be fluent in a foreign language? If you choose a destination that teaches in a foreign language, you will be expected to have a strong level of fluency to be able to cope otherwise your grades may suffer. […] There are also a range of destinations that teach in a combination of English and a foreign language e.g. Japan, Korea, Sweden, The Netherlands, and Malaysia. You may be able to choose to study only in English or in a combination of both languages. (D) Can I study in English? Yes. Many of our partner universities in non-English speaking countries offer a wide range of courses taught in English. However, your exchange semester is also a great time to improve your foreign language skills or learn another language. (L) You have the option of studying in both English speaking and non-English speaking countries. You don't always need to speak the native language to study in a non-English speaking country; however we suggest that you undertake a basic or introductory language course before you leave to make the transition easier. (M) You do not necessarily need to know the language of the country you choose to study in. Many universities in non-English speaking countries offer units taught in English (I)

It may be true that most partner institutions even in non-English speaking countries offer a number of courses taught in English. However, the important point is that, if students are to gain the language benefits, the language learning opportunity needs to be actively encouraged rather than just claiming that the language improvement is a benefit of SA. Simply listing "you can improve language skills" potentially presents language learning as though it is a natural consequence. Of the examples in Table 3, two excerpts from one institution (I) are particularly noteworthy for the contradictory message. The university explicitly encourages prospective participants by stating "You may find that exchange is an opportunity to improve rapidly at a foreign language (depending on where you go)." On the other hand, elsewhere it

states, "You do not necessarily need to know the language of the country you choose to study in," which weakens the position that SA can turn into a great opportunity for enhancing language skills. Naturally, language learning may not be an objective for all SA participants. Nonetheless, the impressions of SA as an opportunity to start or improve a foreign language can be influenced by the extent to which this is encouraged in these publications.

In addition, gaining new friendships and career advantages are repeatedly highlighted as outcomes of SA as summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Sample statements on university websites about new friendships and career advantage from SA

Category	Excerpts
New friendships	• Meet people from different cultural backgrounds (J) • Meet people from across the globe. (M) • You'll meet people from around the globe and develop new friendships. (I) • Build international networks and friends. (K) • Many students report that they grow personally and socially as well as academically as a result of their exchange in addition to building a new network of friends and contacts through the world. (B)
Career advantage	• Set yourself apart from other graduates (employers value international experience). (K) • Many have found improved career prospects, because they now stand out from the crowd. (D) • Professionally gain a competitive edge in the international work force. (J) • An international experience can also give you the competitive edge you need in landing that dream job. (H) • Students and industry professionals are adamant that having been on exchange can improve career prospects. (A) • Your achievement in a different academic and cultural environment will show to employers that you are flexible, that you are adventurous and are a self-starter. (I)

All the rhetoric about new friendships shows similarities, in which SA somehow enables students to meet people from all over the world and establish new networks. These sample statements make meeting new people and becoming friends with them seem simple and easy. It seems to be almost automatic to create new friendship networks, but in reality, meeting people in new places could be a real challenge. It may be easier for extroverted people who are interculturally sensitive, but for others it requires effort to meet new people in unfamiliar environments, and make friends with them. Another question that arises is whether meeting new people and making friends are exclusive to the SA situation. The first three statements particularly warrant attention for describing these friends-to-be as "from different cultural backgrounds" and "from around the globe." Given Australia is a multicultural society, meeting and forming friendships with people from different cultural backgrounds can occur locally without necessarily going abroad. As for career advantages, the first four excerpts refer to competition in the job market, suggesting that SA experiences enable students to outperform other candidates. Meanwhile the last two statements affirm employers' perceptions. There is no indication of how new friendships and career advantages are realised, hence students may get an impression of these benefits being automatic outcomes of SA.

In summary, Australian universities advertise SA through their official publications as being beneficial for gaining improved foreign language skills, cross-cultural understanding and new friendships as well as for career advantages. Close examination, however, finds that the way these benefits are presented generates the impression that these benefits flow automatically. Linguistic and cultural enhancements are touted on the one hand irrespective of which country they go to, and on the other hand, language learning in non-English speaking countries is not always encouraged. All these issues suggest that students need only be passively rather than actively engaged in the in-country experience for these benefits to accrue. This in turn may shape expectations, such that students may feel all they have to do is go anywhere abroad for all these positive outcomes to occur.

What seems absent from the publications is reference to the responsibilities students need to assume: to set their own goals, make discreet decisions on the destination and put in the effort required to make these outcomes happen. This information may be available elsewhere, but the readily available source of information ignores any mention of the effort involved in positive outcomes. These influential publications produce certain impressions of SA which build expectations among prospective participants.

4.3 Short-term language programs abroad and accommodation

The previous sections showed how Australian universities' publications tend to highlight tourism opportunities through SA and infer automatic benefits irrespective of destination. With regard to the type of SA and its length, students usually go for a semester or two, but many factors can prevent students from participating in these programs (e.g., degree restrictions, cost, and uncertainty about a long trip away from home). Along with one or two semesters-long SA, short-term programs are also promoted in these websites. These short programs are typically either language-intensive programs or non-language course-specific programs (e.g., business students taking management courses in English combined with group visits to local companies). According to Olsen (2008), 7,282 students undertook SA across 33 Australian universities in 2005, of which short-term programs made up 25 % (p. 368). This section narrows the focus of the examination to short-term language intensive programs in non-English speaking countries. It aims to see how the short-term programs are presented, and what information specific to short-term programs is available for students, how commonly homestay is included and how homestay is described for students.

The SA websites on the whole present short-term programs, both language-intensive and non-language programs, as a type of SA which is available in cases where one or two semester programs are not suitable for students. The following excerpts show the way institutions promote short programs:

- Thinking of studying abroad, but not able to be away […] for as long as six months or a year? What about considering a short study program? (A)

- If a full semester or full year of exchange is not for you, then check out the options below for a list of all the available short term international experiences from around the world. (L)

- A number of short term programs exist that you may wish to consider in addition to or as an alternative to a semester or year overseas. (F)

- The Study Abroad and Exchange Office will be offering a selection of intensive short-term exchange programs for eligible students. If you have been concerned about fitting a traditional semester or year-long exchange into your degree, are uncertain about embarking on a long trip overseas or just want to fit in another fantastic international opportunity, these programs could be for you. Students will study for 3–6 weeks during either the summer or winter break at one of our exchange partner universities and receive credit towards their degree. (D)

These comments specifically address students' possible concerns which may prevent them from taking up an SA opportunity. Supposedly they are interested in the idea of going abroad through SA, but not for as long as one or two semesters. Hence, short programs are presented as an alternative to consider rather than giving up on the opportunity for an overseas experience. There are no separate testimonials specific to short-term programs readily available. As there is no indication of comparing possible differences, they give the impression that the SA image depicted by these Australian institutions (as discussed in the preceding 4.2) is equally applicable to short programs. A possible exception is the presentation of the language learning aspect.

The ambivalent message about language learning highlighted earlier becomes clearer with regard to short programs. As they are categorised as either language intensive or programs specific to courses such as Business or Architecture, this clearly defines their purpose. Language intensive programs are offered in a variety of languages in a wide range of countries by almost all the universities.[12] The students are to attend intensive language and culture lessons in formal classrooms conducted either in the target language only or a mixture of both the target language and English. In addition, they are to benefit from everyday exposure to the target language and culture outside the classroom. Although not all the programs readily publish the accommodation type, this information is often included as a part of the short description for the respective programs.

[12]Among the 13 universities examined, eight universities' websites had quick links for short-term opportunities on the top page of the outgoing SA programs site.

Table 5 summarises language offering, country and accommodation type in the short programs.[13]

Table 5: SA short-term language programs and accommodation in 2012

Language	Country	Accommodation	Institution
Chinese	Hong Kong	student dormitory	D, K, L
	China	student accommodation	E
		Apartment	L
		student dormitory	H, L
		not stated	A, F
Croatian	Croatia	student dormitory	C
Dutch	Denmark	Hotel	L
French	Switzerland	student dormitory	D
	France	not stated	A, F, H
		university residence	K
		room on campus	M
		student hall/houses	L
	Netherlands	guest house	J
	New Caledonia	Homestay	L
German	Germany	Homestay	A
		hotel	D
	Austria	student hostel	H
	Netherlands	guest house	J
Greek	Greece	student dormitory	J
Hindi	India	not stated	B
Indonesian	Indonesia	not stated	B
		hotel, then make own choice	E
Italian	Italy	student residence	D
		Hotel	E
		university residence	K
Japanese	Japan	not stated	B
		Homestay	E, G, L
		homestay or apartment	K
		Apartment	J
Korean	South Korea	Dormitory	A, F, L
		student accommodation	K
Spanish	Mexico	not stated	H
		homestay	J
	Spain	homestay	J
Thai	Thai/Burma Border	not stated	B
Vietnamese	Vietnam	not stated	B

[13] These programs are offered either by the institution's exchange partners or by non-partner institutions. In addition, AIM Overseas (http://www.aimoverseas.com.au/AIM_Overseas__study_overseas.html) was listed as a third party provider recommended by three universities. Although AIM advertises that they offer a variety of short intensive language programs, no further information is readily available, hence this is not included in the table.

Note 1: This table is created based on information retrieved from the relevant websites on 7 May 2012.
Note 2: Terms such as "student dormitory" or "university residence" may refer to the same type of accommodation, but the table shows the exact wording from the source.

Among 46 short-term language programs identified, seven programs do not state anything about the accommodation, but the remaining 39 programs readily advertise the information. This indicates that pre-determined accommodation predominates on these short language programs. While dormitory style student accommodation is listed in the majority of the above programs, eight specify homestay accommodation. Half of these are programs in Japan, which indicates that the homestay component is a common living arrangement in short-term Japanese programs. Earlier, I argued that the linguistic and cultural experience of SA would differ depending on the destination. Even within the same country, the linguistic and cultural milieu in which students find themselves would significantly differ depending on their living arrangement. The idealised image of SA is a student being totally immersed in the host culture although in reality, it is possible to spend the time abroad with very little contact with the host nationals. This is particularly the case for short-term programs where students are accommodated together in student dormitories. Even within the same country, out-of-class experiences differ considerably between staying in a hotel, student accommodation or homestay with local families. The particular setting shapes student experiences in language and cultural aspects as well as interpersonal relations. Therefore, it becomes crucial to understand how intercultural experiences play out in different kinds of accommodation. In the context of Japanese short programs, the homestay is often a key component, thus it warrants a dedicated study that examines the particular setting to gain deeper understanding of the nature of intercultural experiences.

In addition to the information summarised in Table 5, the following evidence shows the ready availability of homestay in Japan. On one university's SA office website, a "Culture and Language Guide" is offered for some countries, which contains practical, cultural and language-related information. Although the university has exchange partner institutions in 38 countries, the guide was available only for France, Germany, Japan and Mexico at the time of access. All four countries offered dormitories in the "Student Accommodation" section, but only in the guide to Japan was homestay listed as an option. This suggests that homestay is readily available for overseas students in Japan. Yet, little information is provided about the Japanese homestay concept:

> If you want to experience Japanese family life and improve your Japanese skills rapidly, homestay is the best option for you. Homestay families usually provide a furnished private room and two meals a day for hosted students. (L)

This particular guide recommends homestay on two grounds: Experiencing Japanese family life and rapid linguistic improvement. The phrase "family life" is conveniently used, assuming shared understanding of what it means, but how students interpret it is questionable. They possibly think of their own family life as a model. As homestay is widely available in Australia for international students, they may have certain pre-impressions about homestay life. In contrast with the way these sending institutions echo a certain type of rhetoric about SA experience in general, very little information is provided with regard to homestay or other types of accommodation.

In summary, the publications present short-term language intensive programs as a type of SA readily available in many countries, which can be taken up if duration is an issue. There is no apparent distinction made between one or two semesters and shorter programs in terms of the values and benefits. Therefore, irrespective of the different durations, the overarching presentation of SA programs may generate similar impressions about the automatic benefits of cultural immersion, gaining new friendships and career advantages. The language learning message is no longer ambivalent as short programs are classified into language or non-language courses. With regard to specific components of these programs, many of these specify on-campus dormitory type of accommodation although homestay is more commonly incorporated in programs in Japan. Yet, very little information is readily available about what the homestay experience would be like for students. On the other hand, publications by Japanese host institutions outline what to expect in the homestay in a more specific manner.

4.4 Homestay conceptualisation by two Japanese host universities

This section looks into the two Japanese host universities' official publications on their short intensive programs. It examines what characteristics emerge in the ways that the short programs are described and the homestay concept is explained respectively to host families and students. The analysis attempts to identify any similarities or differences in the

information between the two host universities. It also compares the kinds of information provided to both groups of participants - the students and the host families - which potentially influence their expectations towards homestay experience.

Three publication types are available for examination: recruitment advertisements for students and host families, student handbooks written in English and handbooks for homestay families written in Japanese. On the whole, the host universities use strikingly similar rhetoric across these publications. However, while certain comments on some aspects of homestay are included in both students' and host families' publications, the emphases are not necessarily the same. Simultaneously, a few points in the host family publications are absent in the host student publications. Both universities hold an orientation meeting with host families before students' arrival and with students on the first day of the program. Nonetheless, these publications still play a role in shaping the participants' expectations about the program as a whole, and particularly about the homestay component. The following sections describe some salient features in publications for students first, then those for host families, followed by comparison of the two.

4.4.1 Publications for students

Both recruitment flyers state "Japanese language and culture program" and "A great introduction to life and study in Japan," describing the accommodation as "homestay." Host university A (in Tokyo) issues the students with a 18-page A4 program booklet whereas host university B (near Osaka) issues a 9-page A4 program booklet. Both booklets are written in English and include practical information for students such as how to get around the new city and the university with local and campus maps, their class schedule, contact details for the international centre, emergency telephone numbers, transports, shops and tourist attractions. The difference in the volumes is because university A devotes nine pages to explaining about Japanese traditional cultural activities (e.g., karate, calligraphy). These activities are incorporated as a part of the program in addition to language intensive classes.

With regard to homestay, both universities dedicate a page to brief students on what to expect, and what to do or not do. Slight differences in emphasis are observed on some points and a few points are only covered by one university. However, many of the points covered are the

same: a student being welcomed, Japanese households being different from students', the need to follow the house rules, and to ensure to practise Japanese. The relevant excerpts are presented in this order. The point about students being welcomed appears as follows:

> Your host family welcome you to their home as a family member very kindly. (B)
> Remember that you are most welcomed from your family. (A)

The phrase "as a family member" is referred to only by one though this point potentially influences the participant's interpretation of their relational dynamics. In the publications for host families, on the other hand, the idea about perceiving a student "as a family member" is commented on by both institutions and elaborated with extra emphasis as will be discussed in the next sub-section 4.4.2.

The second point raised by both institutions is that Japanese families, customs and lifestyle are different from students':

> Japanese families and household customs are very different from those in your home country, so you will need to approach homestay life with a positive and open mind. You may experience many different things during homestay. We advise you to take them as great opportunities to get to know and appreciate each other. (A)

> You will enjoy the Japanese lifestyle which must be different from yours. (B)

Students would be expecting to experience different ways of life abroad. Yet the above excerpts place additional emphases on this aspect. Students are explicitly reminded about the fact that aspects of Japanese life are "very different from those in your home country" and "must be different from yours." University A stresses this aspect particularly, stating further that "homestay life sometimes seems hard" and hinting at potential problems in other parts of their publications. Thus, the intercultural differences are presented both as the cause of problems and as something to be appreciated and enjoyed.

The third point about house rules is conveyed in a similar manner:

> Each family has its own household customs and rules. Please respect their request. (A, original emphasis)
> Ask the rule of your host family - about smoking, time for breakfast and dinner, laundry, Japanese manners, time to come home, etc. (B)
> Let your host family know where you are going and what time you will be home if you plan to be late. (A, original emphasis)
> If you are late in coming home or don't need to have dinner at home, please let your host family know about it beforehand or give a phone call to them. (B)

The above courtesy points are to facilitate smooth living together, and university A underlines these points as particularly important. Other related practical matters are also included telling students what to do and not do such as "look after the house key," and "do not use the house phone" and so on.

The last point re-emphasises the importance for students of making a conscious effort to speak Japanese with the families:

> Don't be embarrassed or afraid to ask questions. They will respect you for trying, even if your Japanese is not perfect. (A)
> Helping your host families is a good chance to practise your Japanese. Offer to help with daily work, like setting the table and washing the dishes. (A)
> They will be very interested to know what you are going to do for a day and what you have experienced in a day! Have a talk and enjoy speaking Japanese! (B)

All these points suggest that the host families are available, encouraging students to make efforts to practice Japanese by actively interacting with them. In other words, students are advised to make the most of the host families' availability as an important resource for learning Japanese.

4.4.2 Publications for host families

Two types of publications are available for the host families: the recruitment advertisements and homestay briefs. In the latter documents, there are substantial differences between the

two universities with the amount of information provided for host families. University A's homestay handbook is A4 six pages entitled "Homestay handbook for host families" (**ホストファミリーのためのホームステイハンドブック**) whereas university B issues an A4 double-sided sheet entitled "Host family resources" (**ホストファミリー資料**). B's handout concisely comments on what the families should and should not do for their host students in dot points. On the other hand, A's handbook adopts a more narrative style compared with B's. It includes more elaborated content including one and a half pages of FAQs and examples of miscommunications.

Despite the differences in style and quantity of information, they share common topics. For example, both include comments on the house rules (i.e., asking the host families to communicate about the rules with their students on the first day), language use (i.e., asking the host families to speak in Japanese) and what to do in case of a student's illness. These topics match the information given to students in their publications.

There are three noteworthy differences between the host family publications and the student publications. Firstly, the use of the term **国際交流** *kokusai kōryū* (international exchange) deserves attention. This term, which is absent in student publications, is used to refer to the concept and purpose of homestay by both host institutions. Secondly, more emphasis is placed on the status of students as **家族の一員** *kazoku no ichiin* (a family member) in the information for host families. Thirdly, more emphasis is found on the extent to which Japanese culture and customs are described as being different from students'.

In the respective recruitment flyers, both host institutions use the exact same keyword to describe the kind of people sought for host families. The particular term is *kokusai kōryū* (international exchange), suggesting that one crucial function of homestay is to engage in this activity.

> 大学は、毎年オーストラリア X 大学学生のための日本語･日本文化学習プログラムを実施しております。このプログラムの一環であるホームステイは、日本の家庭で直接日本語会話を実践し、さまざまな角度から日本文化を体験できる最高の機会

と考えております。国際交流にご理解のあるボランティアの皆様のご協力を賜れば、幸甚に存じます。

The university holds the Japanese language and culture learning program every year for students from the Australian University X. Homestay forms a part of this program. We consider homestay provides the best opportunity for students to practise Japanese conversation in a Japanese household and experience Japanese culture from various angles. We would like to receive cooperation from volunteers who have understanding about international exchange. (A) (my translation and emphasis)

国際交流にご興味のある方、是非留学生を家族の一員として受入れていただき、日本の家庭における習慣、生活環境の体験の機会を与えていただけませんか。

If you are interested in international exchange, could you please host an exchange student as a member of your family and give them an opportunity to experience customs and life in Japanese household? (B) (my translation and emphasis)

The term "international exchange" is ubiquitously used for organised activities and events where Japanese and non-Japanese are brought together for interactions in Japan or overseas. The international exchange events organised in Japan assume dual benefits: non-Japanese students are to learn about Japan/Japanese culture while the Japanese are to learn about foreign countries and cultures. Simultaneously, these activities are expected to build friendships. The second Japanese word of the term, *kōryū,* translated as "exchange" above, has also many other related meanings such as "socialisation," "mingling" and "interactions." This word is also used in both institutions' homestay handbooks to comment on the homestay objective:

学生達は皆、日本語、日本文化・歴史等を学ぶこと、そして日本の皆さんとの交流を目的に、来日いたします。

All students will come to Japan with the aim to learn Japanese language, culture and history etc. as well as interactions with Japanese people. (B)

皆様は、留学生との交流のなかからさまざまなことを体験し、ご家族一人ひとりの生活を充実させる機会に恵まれます。

> You will be all blessed with the opportunity where you experience various things through interactions with exchange students and fulfil lives of each one of your family members. (A)

According to the recruitment flyer, these host families are people interested in "international exchange" activities. In addition, B comments that interacting or socialising with host families is one of the aims of the exchange students while A emphasises such activities as beneficial for the hosts as well. Therefore, from these references to *kōryū* (interaction or socialisation), host families would expect to take on the responsibility of providing lessons about Japanese language, culture, customs and their way of life through daily interactions while building amicable relationships. Simultaneously, mutual obligations are implied for the students' involvement in contributing to the exchange. The concept of viewing homestay in this way, however, is absent in student publications.

The point about a student's status in the family is given far more attention in the host family publications than those for students. The status is explicitly defined as not a guest but as a family member. This notion appears in the recruitment advertisement quoted earlier (i.e., "please host an exchange student as a member of your family"), and is repeated in the handbook:

> 特別扱いせず、家族として接していただけたらと思います。家族の一員として迎えることが一番の研修となります。なるべく普段のままに生活してください。
>
> Please do not give them special treatment but treat them as a family member. It is the best learning opportunity for them to be welcomed as a family member. Please try to keep your usual lifestyle as much as possible. (B)

> 留学生を家族の一員として迎えることは、容易ではないことも少なからずあります。（…）あまり神経質になり過ぎず、留学生を信頼し、時には本当の親のように叱ったり、励ましたりすることで、ホストファミリーも、留学生と一緒になって異文化体験を楽しむことができます。
>
> Sometimes it is not easy to welcome an exchange student as a member of your family. (…) Do not become oversensitive, but trust your student, and scold or encourage them at times, like a real parent. By doing this, host families can enjoy intercultural

experiences (Literally, experiencing different cultures) together with the exchange students. (A) (my translation)

These excerpts explicitly ask a host family to treat a student as a family member. Considering the family home is a private space, this creates a unique situation, in which strangers from different cultural backgrounds supposedly form a temporary family unit. This element, in turn, becomes a crucial variable in setting the dynamics for their interpersonal relations. A's handbook even overtly tells host families to act like the student's "real parents." In essence, the status of students is specified not just as a family member but as a child in the family. As will be shown in the findings from the interview data, several episodes suggest that this attitude manifests in the host parent's behaviour. Students, on the other hand, have very little information to lead them to expect to receive such treatment. In addition, the following narratives present idealised outcomes from treating a student as a family member.

ホームステイを終えた留学生に感想を聞くと、誰もが口を揃えて「自分を家族の一員として迎え入れてくれた」ことへの感謝の言葉を述べます。

When we ask exchange students for comments after their homestay, everyone states nothing but words for appreciation about "being welcomed as a family member." (A)

留学生は、日本での生活や、ホストファミリーの皆様のことを、生涯忘れることはありません。日本にできたもう一つの家族との出会いとその貴重な体験によって、日本が彼（女）らにとっての第二の故郷になるのです。

Exchange students will never forget about their life in Japan and host families for the rest of their life. Through meeting with another family gained in Japan and the valuable experience, Japan becomes their second hometown. (A)

These comments clearly highlight the desirable impact the host families can expect to make by treating their students as part of the family. According to these narratives, not only do students appreciate it, but it even affects their views towards Japan as a nation by turning it into their second hometown. This sentimental description may lead host families to build up expectations about fostering special lasting relationships with their homestay students.

Cross-cultural differences are the third point emphasised in the host family publications more than in the publications for students. This is elaborated as follows:

> 経験を通じて、彼（女）らは、わが国の文化や習慣を理解する機会を得ることになります。ただし、日本人の「考え方」を理解できるようになるまでには、時間と経験が必要であり、また宗教や生活習慣の違いからどうしても守ることができないルールもあることも、併せてご理解ください。
>
> The experience opens up opportunities in which students strive to understand our nation's culture and custom. However, please understand that they need time and experience to get to the stage of being able to understand "the way Japanese people think." Please also understand that there are rules they would not possibly be able to follow because of differences in religions and customs. (A) (my translation)

To refer to Japanese culture, the document uses the highly formal expression *wagakuni no bunka* (our nation's culture). This particular wording makes it sound nationalistic to a certain degree. The second sentence assumes that there is a uniform way Japanese people think. This is one hypothesis that underpins *Nihonjin-ron* (theories about the Japanese), which was reviewed earlier in 2.5. If it takes time and experience to get to understand the Japanese way of thinking, it implies that these students, who are staying only for a short time, will not be able to understand it. This handbook further includes a past incident as an example, a case in which a host family complained that their student used the internet too much at home. The student was apparently told that it was all right to use it as much as they liked. The document attributes the cause to the student's poor understanding of the Japanese way of consideration and the high-context nature of Japanese communication. Consciously or unconsciously, these explanations highlight the idea that Japanese and non-Japanese people are fundamentally different in culture, customs and ways of thinking. These descriptions would shape host families' expectations in a particular way, which will be discussed in the following 4.4.3.

4.4.3 Comparing Japanese homestay information for students and host families

Similar information is provided to students and host families by the Japanese host universities' publications, although differences emerge in a few topics as well as in emphasis. Both documents show similarities in three aspects: explanation of the Japanese home as offering a

different lifestyle for students; description of a student's status as a family member; and emphasis on the homestay as the avenue for Japanese language practice.

Noteworthy differences have emerged in two aspects. The notion of international exchange is presented only to host families and it is absent in the publications for students. Different approaches are also adopted in presenting information for two groups. The publications for students list dos and don'ts covering practical matters, while publications for host families are more explanatory. In other words, the former focuses on students' behaviour referring to what to do or not do, whereas the latter goes beyond this by outlining an idealised vision for homestay, referring to reciprocal benefits.

In contrast with these obvious differences, the descriptions of a student's status show more subtle variations between the information provided to the two groups. Both host families and students are told that the student should be treated as "a family member" although the concept is more elaborated for host families (e.g., explicitly encouraging them to act like a real parent). The positive outcome from treating their students in this particular manner is underscored only for host families. Even if both parties accept that the student becomes "a part of the family," these differences may influence the way they interpret what that actually entails. From the students' viewpoint, they have vague ideas that the experience will be somewhat different, but they may simply model this concept from their own experiences of family life. Consequently, these different descriptions in the Japanese universities' publications are likely to create mismatches in expectations about relational dynamics that develop between students and hosts in the short-term Japanese homestay context.

4.5 Comparing the promotion of short-term SA to Japan by sending and host institutions

Similarities and differences also emerge between the way Australian universities and Japanese host universities promote short-term programs to Japan. The Australian universities promote all short-term programs without necessarily differentiating the kind of experience and benefits from their longer-term counterparts. These SA websites generally list programs shorter than a semester as an alternative. Therefore, these publications largely depict SA's image through the use of particular descriptions and photos (as described in 4.2). This can

also influence impressions of short-term intensive language programs, including those in Japan.

On the whole, these impressions may lead to unrealistic expectations among prospective participants. Supposedly, SA enables them to enjoy lots of travel, hence it is filled with fun and any negative experience or difficulties will be resolved somehow. Furthermore, SA appears to confer automatic benefits of learning language and a new culture, and establishing a global network of friends. This supposedly leads to standing out in the crowded job market and getting a dream job. In addition, any reference to the attitudes and effort necessary to gain these benefits is mostly absent. No particular recommendation is apparent between numerous destinations, different accommodation types or the length of stay, with the implication that these choices are not determining factors in the SA outcomes. Homestays in Japanese programs are stated simply as a program component, which enhance language and culture learning through family life.

In comparison, Japanese host universities promote the short language programs as consisting of intensive language classes, cultural activities, day trips to tourist attractions and homestay. Homestay is presented as a particularly attractive opportunity because it enables students to immerse themselves in Japanese daily customs, culture, language and the way of life. The host families welcome them into their homes as a family member and they are willing to help them to learn Japanese language and culture. Accordingly, students are encouraged to make efforts to practise Japanese through daily conversations with the host families.

The descriptions by the sending and host institutions similarly refer to the tourism aspect, and language and culture learning benefits. At the same time, apparent differences exist. Although the host institutions explain that small group trips are organised as a part of these programs, more emphasis seems to be placed on the intensive language and cultural lessons in both classrooms and homestay. The most notable difference is the extent to which the emphasis is placed on the homestay as a valuable component of the program. The homestay is highlighted by the host universities for its dual roles: providing lessons for Japanese language, culture and customs as well as offering family-ship. As a result, students may receive mixed impressions about what the experience of participating in short-term programs to Japan would be like.

4.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter began with the broad picture of SA provided by Australian universities, and then narrowed the focus to short-term language programs in Japan, in which homestays play a significant role. As a result, the examination highlighted problematic trends. Due to the strongly promotional nature of their official publications, the academic aspect of SA is overpowered by the tourism experience. On the one hand, becoming a temporary resident abroad is presented as a SA benefit, while touristic attractions are emphasised on the other. Hence, a contradictory message has emerged between immersing into the host culture to become a resident and being a tourist.

Despite a wide range of country choices, understating the importance of destination selection fails to distinguish between different linguistic and cultural experiences. Thus, these publications paint SA destinations with the same broad brush as all being linguistically and culturally different from Australia. Furthermore, the sending institutions overemphasise the outcomes or benefits for students while giving very little information about the culturally and contextually specific nature of intercultural experiences.

The analysis further showed how commonly homestay is integrated into short-term language intensive programs to Japan in comparison with other countries. Nonetheless, very little information is provided by Australian universities about student accommodation or homestay. Therefore, publications from host institutions would be a crucial source of information for the students. In examining how homestay experiences are conceptualised and described, what is particularly noteworthy is the information gap and differing emphasis between the publications in English for students and the publications in Japanese for host families. Consequently, these potentially lead to some mismatches between expectations that may arise among students and host families.

When people hold certain expectations, this can implicitly or explicitly affect their perceptions about what they actually experience. Accordingly, these may result in misinterpreting the situation, and making certain misjudgements about the individual, and his or her cultural background in intercultural communication. These premises will shape the way Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present the findings from journal entries and interview data. They

are framed in accordance with the specific kinds of expectations raised in the Japanese homestay context in short-term SA programs.

Chapter 5. Demographic information of participants

5.1 Introduction

This section provides a demographic profile for each host family and student, including their age, language proficiency level and overseas travel experience. The purpose is to outline their various backgrounds so that readers can contextualise their stories of intercultural experiences and perceptions.

5.2 Host Families

The host families are all volunteers who receive no monetary return from the student or the university. However, the international offices of the Japanese universities present the families with a shopping voucher worth 20,000 yen (about A$210) after the homestay as a token of thanks. All the families received Australian souvenirs from their respective host students.

There is no single-parent household as all households have both a host mother and father. They can be all described as middle-class to upper-middle class. Seven families live in the Tokyo area and two live in the Osaka area. Table 6 summarises their attributes under six categories: age, previous hosting experience, English skills and overseas travel experience in the family, occupation and number of children living in the house. Following the table, I outline some group characteristics for each attribute, which is followed by a description of aspects of housing and motivation.

Table 6: Host families profile

	Age	Previous hosting experience	English skills	Travelled Overseas	Occupation	Number of children who live in the household (age)
H1	Father 68* Mother 64*	extensive	some limited	Yes Yes	retired retired	0
H2	Father 62 Mother 58*	2	Some Limited	Yes No	company employee admin.	3 (31, 28, 26)
H3	Father 60 Mother 56*	extensive	Limited Limited	Yes Yes	shrine keeper kindergarten owner and teacher	0
H4	Father 40 Mother 39*	extensive	limited some	Yes Yes	company employee housewife	2 (16, 14)
H5	Father 41 Mother 38*	4	Limited Some	Yes Yes	company employee housewife	1 (0)
H6	Father 62 Mother 58*	extensive	Limited Limited	Yes Yes	company employee housewife	2 (31, 29)
H7	Father 44 Mother 48*	0	limited fluent	Yes Yes	company employee self-employed	1 (14)
H8	Father 46* Mother 46	2	limited limited	Yes Yes	academic housewife	0
H9	Father 46 Mother 43*	0	Fluent Some	Yes Yes	company employee housewife	2 (13, 10)

Note 1: (*) indicates the interviewees.
Note 2: H4's 16-year-old daughter was on high school exchange in the United States at the time of the homestay.

Note 3: Company employee refers to white-collar company employee.

5.2.1 Age, gender and previous hosting experience

The interviewees are aged 38-68. The average age among the interviewees is 51.8. Out of 10 interviewees, two are host fathers and the remaining eight are host mothers. Four out of nine families have extensive experiences in hosting foreign students over more than 10 years (H1,

H3, H4 and H6). The guests are mostly university exchange students, but they have also hosted high school and primary school students. Among them, three families are registered as a volunteer family with their municipal office. Through that system, they sometimes host non-students who are in Japan for vocational training, and usually live in a dormitory or apartment, but register for a weekend homestay.

Two families had never previously offered homestay (H7 and H9). Both of them said that they had been interested in offering homestay for some time, but they had never had an opportunity. Both have school-age children so they share similar views that having a foreigner in their house enables their children to experience intercultural communication, which is beneficial. While believing that the experience is precious, they comment on the difficulty of continuing to offer homestay once they must focus on their children's studies to prepare for the entrance examination to get into high schools.

Three families have previously hosted students between two and four times (H2, H5 and H7). They have hosted only high school and/or university exchange students. One characteristic common to all nine host families is that they have experienced only short stays.

5.2.2 English skills among the family members

At least one host family member per household spoke English to varying degrees. Each interviewed host parent self-assessed the English proficiency within their family. This self-reporting could be combined with their stories on how they managed communicating with their students. Accordingly, I scale their English proficiency levels into the following categories.

Table 7: Host family English proficiency levels

Category	Description
Limited	A minimum proficiency restricted to some English vocabulary
Some	Able to speak and understand some basic sentences such as "What do you like?" and "Young people use the word."
Fluent	Able to converse relatively freely in English.

No interviewees are likely to describe themselves as "fluent" as Japanese generally tend to value humbleness. Although one of the interviewees, H7, did not describe herself as "fluent," she was able to switch to English to communicate with her student who does not speak Japanese much to talk about the student's friend's complaints. Accordingly, she is categorised as "fluent."

Apart from the interviewees, three family members are considered fluent. They are H2's son who acts as an interpreter for their student, S8's host mother and H9's husband. According to S8's stories from both her journal entries and interview, her host mother used to live in the United States, has taught English overseas and was able to switch to English when necessary. H9's husband was away on a business trip to England for the first week of their homestay period, but upon his return, he had conversations in English about various topics including Brisbane's climate and population with their student.

5.2.3 Overseas travel experience in the family

All the families include someone who has been overseas for various purposes such as sightseeing, visiting friends, business or homestay. All the host parents have been overseas except for the H2 host mother. As for their children living at home, H2's two sons have travelled overseas with the younger son undertaking a working holiday in Australia at the time of interview. Of the remaining children, H6's two daughters and H7's daughter have been overseas through family trips.

5.2.4 Occupation

Only one family is a retired couple (H1). Of the remaining host mothers, five are housewives (H4, H5, H6, H8 and H9), one (H3) runs her own kindergarten, one (H2) works part-time as

an administration officer and one (H7) runs a web-related business from home. H3 is a full-time worker, though her kindergarten is right across from their family home and the host mother was mostly available for her student. The husbands in six households are white-collar company employees, and the other two are a shrine keeper and a university lecturer. Therefore, they are mostly single-income middle-class families with at least one family member (usually the host mother) available for students in the house.

5.2.5 Number of children in the family

Three families have no children at home (H1, H3 and H8). Although H1 (the retired couple) have no children living in their house, the family of the older daughter with three small children live right behind their house and they join them for dinner on a regular basis. Two families have adult children living in the house (H2 and H6). Three families have school age children (H4, H7 and H9), but H4's 16-year-old daughter is not living at home as she is studying in the United States.

5.2.6 Housing

Seven families live in a house with the remaining two living in apartments (H3 and H6). The researcher visited eight households out of nine participants.[14] They all looked middle-class to upper middle-class dwellings. Unlike Australian middle-class houses that often have two sets of bathrooms and toilets, Japanese houses and apartments usually contain only one bathroom and toilet, which are to be shared by all the family members.

One of the conditions both Japanese universities set out for host families is to provide their student a private bedroom and bedding (bed or Japanese futon). Therefore, whether house or apartment, they all have a spare room to offer their student. According to S7, S7's two host sisters were temporarily sharing a bedroom in order to make one of their rooms available for S7.

5.2.7 Motivation

[14] The interview venue for H3 was in her kindergarten's office, but I was able to see their family home from outside as it was situated right across from it on the same block of land.

When asked about the positive aspects of homestay, all host parent participants mention that it is good to experience different or other cultures. Literally most of them said, "*Ibunka ni fureru*" (Be in touch with different cultures) or "*Hokano bunka ni fureru*" (Be in touch with other cultures). Only two interviewees (H5 and H8) brought up the benefit of practising English. H5 mentioned it as her original motivation, which she has now given up. H8 also mentioned that the experience created a fun, comforting [the Japanese word used here is "*iyasareru*"] change to their life as the couple has no children.

Among the four families who have extensive homestay experience, there is a common motivating factor. They simply enjoy the experience of having foreign visitors in their homes. In particular H1, H2 and H6, who have participated in the same programs over the years, seem to perceive homestay as their annual fun event. They share the view that the experience provides stimulus to their life using their expressions, "*Shigeki ni naru*" (It is stimulating) or "*Seikatsu ni merihariga deru*" (gives activeness to life). They look forward to meeting a new student each year.

5.3 Students

Not all host families and host students from the 2009 homestay program participated in the research. Therefore, the numbering for participants is independent. For example, H2 does not necessarily correspond to S2 as the hosted student. Among the students, there are two males (S1 and S2) and seven females. Out of nine student participants in the present project, seven students were born and grew up in Australia, while two were born outside Australia (S8 and S9). S9 is an international student from Malaysia, and the only non-native speaker of English. However, as she has lived in Australia for five years since high school, she is fluent enough to be interviewed in English. S8's parents are originally from the Philippines and she was born there. Her family migrated to New Zealand when she was a baby, and she became a New Zealander, and then moved to Australia many years ago. This is not an untypical representation of demographics in Australia. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2011, over one in four Australians were born overseas (ABS, 2014). There have been many historical changes in the source countries of immigrants since Federation, when people from Britain and Ireland made up over three-quarters of all the overseas born population in Australia. Since 1973, after the dismantling of the White Australia policy, new groups of migrants have been arriving from all parts of the world, notably from Asia, increasing the

diversity of Australia's population (ABS, 2014). Thus, even though seven students were born in Australia, their parents and/or grandparents may have come from different countries. Such diversity in cultural backgrounds is typical among Australian university students and may contribute to differences in the ways that they interpret their intercultural experiences in the Japanese homestay context. However, in the current research the students rarely talked about Japan, Japanese people and/or Japanese culture in terms of their or their parents' other cultural experiences. Hence, there is insufficient data to explore the students' diverse cultural backgrounds and their influences on students' expectations and impressions of the SA experience, and their behaviours.

Table 8 summarises the students' attributes under seven categories: Gender, age, year at university, Japanese proficiency level, period of Japanese study, previous trips to Japan and other previous overseas travel experience.

Table 8: Students' profiles

	Male/ Female	Age	Year in university	Japanese proficiency level	Previous Japanese study	Previous trips to Japan	Other previous overseas travel
S1	M	18	1st	beginner	1 year	None	none
S2	M	18	1st	beginner	1 year	None	none
S3	F	18	2nd	intermediate	6 years	high school excursion	United States
S4	F	19	1st	beginner	1 year	None	Thailand
S5	F	19	2nd	intermediate	6 years	high school excursion	none
S6	F	19	2nd	lower intermediate	4 years	high school excursion	United States
S7	F	20	2nd	lower intermediate	2 years	None	Netherlands
S8	F	19	2nd	lower intermediate	5 years	None	None
S9	F	21	2nd	beginner	1 year	None	Malaysia*

Note 1: *S9 is the only international student and is originally from Malaysia.

5.3.1 Age, gender and year in university

The students are aged 18-21 with the average age being 19. There are only two male students, which is consistent with a general trend of greater female participation rates in SA. Three students had just finished the first year and six the second year in their respective undergraduate degrees.

5.3.2 Previous Japanese study and travel

The group comprises three different levels of Japanese proficiency: four beginners, three lower intermediate and two intermediate students. The categorisation is not based on a proficiency test, but on a combination of students' self-assessment together with the exit level prescribed after successfully completing each Japanese subject.

The four beginning level students commenced their Japanese study at the university and studied for one year (two semesters) (S1, S2, S4 and S9). One student had studied for two years (four semesters) at the university (S7). The remaining four students had started their Japanese studies at high school and continued at the university (S3, S5, S6 and S8).

This was the first trip to Japan for six students. Among them, only one had been to Thailand (S4) and it was the first trip overseas for the other five. Three students had previously travelled to Japan for a short homestay on a high school excursion. At the time, they mostly stayed in youth hostels and stayed with a Japanese family for two nights. Thus, it was the second time to experience homestay in Japan for them. Two students had previously been to the United States for sightseeing trips (S3 and S6). One had had a homestay in the Netherlands some years ago when she was learning Dutch (S7).

Chapter 6. Findings and Discussion: Expectations of family role

6.1 Introduction

A total of 18 interviews were undertaken individually (nine students and nine host families as explained in the preceding chapter). Certain topics were brought up repeatedly across the interviews. There are topics referred to frequently by both groups, such as food, language, dinner time conversations, bath/shower and laundry. On the other hand, there are also topics raised only by either the host parents or the students. These include thank you notes (host parents) and phone calls (students). Within the topics, issues were raised such as willingness to talk at dinner and obligations to phone host parents. Some of these issues echoed the points raised in the analysis of official publications on Study Abroad and homestay in Japan in Chapter 4. These issues often differ between host families and students, and point to differences in the perceptions and reactions reported by both groups. This in turn suggests that different expectations may be held by the two groups about the homestay experience.

As explained in Chapter 3, a content analysis was undertaken to discover any themes emerging from these data. There are recurring issues, which can be divided into three themes, and they can be framed as answers to the research sub-questions. Some are related to the relationships students and host families form during the homestay period. The particular relationship influences the way host parents assume their roles, which in turn determines students' roles and vice-versa. There seem to be mismatches in assumptions and expectations, which underlie issues raised by the participants. A second theme is related to the relationship that follows the homestay. Even after the short stay ends, there is a long-term implication though it may be invisible. Both these themes are related to the idea of becoming instant family. By contrast, the third group of issues is related to expectations of homestay as comprising international/intercultural exchange activities. As these homestays are organised as an essential part of the exchange programs, assumptions are generated about hosts' and students' respective roles.

Chapters 6 and 7 are framed primarily as answers to the first and second sub-research questions related to kinds of expectations about the homestay experience, and the effect the short-term homestay context has on the roles and relationships for students and host families. The discussion of findings is divided into expectations during the stay and after the stay. The

current Chapter 6 discusses the findings related to expectations of roles as a family member during the stay. The discussions are divided into four sub themes: instant family (this idea will also arise in the following Chapter 7 about the ongoing relationship), the parent-child dynamic, the role of dinner time and instant intimacy.

6.2 Instant family

A Culture and Language Guide for Japan downloadable from one university's SA website (see 4.2) states, "Homestay families usually provide a furnished private room and two meals a day for hosted students." Although this sentence makes the homestay sound like an accommodation package deal, on the contrary, homestay provides much more. It offers a unique situation as relative strangers from different cultural backgrounds try to form a temporary family unit instantly. The host universities match host families and their students. Hence, the moment when host families come to the university to pick up their student is the moment they meet for the first time. Naturally, both parties are excited and anxious. S9, who wrote extensive journal entries to record her time in Japan, provides this insight into the moment she met her host parents:

> After understanding the homestay rules, the atmosphere has warmed up with excitement. We started to crack some jokes in the office while waiting for our host family! My name was called. Apparently my host mum has arrived! My heart beats increased and filled with excitement! The moment has come! "Konnichiwa" I said. She greeted me with an Australian style hug […] I met my host dad at home and he greeted me with a hug, too. These hugs surprised me. Because they have done homestay for many years, they knew these customs. They are very friendly. (S9, journal entries Day 1)

This small episode illustrates how excited the student was about meeting her host parents. It also demonstrates a peculiar homestay setting. Hugging is an uncommon custom in Japan, whether family or not, particularly in a public space like a university office. As S9 points out, the parents may have learnt the custom from their past experiences with international students over the years. They are trying to welcome the student in an Australian way, not in a Japanese way. What the hugging does in this particular setting is create a situation of instant

intimacy between S9 and her host parents. The idea of forming an instant family also entails host parents assuming parental roles and responsibilities, which seems to influence their perceptions and behaviour. Indeed the following three host mothers comment how they see themselves as the students' mothers:

> 私はなにか娘が毎日きちんと帰って料理手伝ってくれて一緒に食べるという感じで、嬉しかったですね。
> I was happy, feeling as if my daughter came home properly every day, helped me with cooking and ate together with me. (H3)

> あとみんながね「お母さん、お母さん。」って呼んでくれて、うちは娘二人で息子がいないんですが、息子と接する機会が出来て、この上ない喜びなんです。
> Another thing is that everyone calls me "Mother, mother." I have two daughters, but no son. It created the opportunity to associate with sons, which is a great joy. (H6)

> うちにステイしている間、ずっと私の事を「お母さん」と呼んでくれて、頼ってくれたのが嬉しかったです。
> I was glad that she called me "mother" and relied on me all the time while she stayed with us. (H4)

H3 and H6 explicitly state that they consider their students as honorary daughters and sons. In addition, H4 expresses her happy feeling about being called "mother."[15] These host mothers' anecdotal stories indicate that they perceive the student in the role of their child.

This notion of instant family-ship seems to strongly underpin what these families do for their host students. This in turn generates both positive and negative perceptions among the students. One positive reaction towards being treated as a family member is the idea of being cared for. All the students comment how welcomed they felt through being treated as a part of the host family. What repeatedly emerged from the data are the students' appreciative views about how well they are cared for in the host family. The following are typical comments that reflect these perceptions:

[15] H4's 16-year-old daughter was on a one-year high school exchange in the United States at the time, creating the opportunity for H4 to view her homestay student as a temporary replacement.

> OK. Good things. The homestay is very, in general, homestay is something special. They registered? I don't know how to put it, the people who are looking after you, put their hands up to take care of you. It is fantastic that they are very willing and accommodating. My host family was also willing, generous and accommodating […] they were taking care of me in the morning. Breakfast was always there for me when I get up and things like that. (S6)

> I remember everything (laugh) but maybe, my host mum? She was really caring and she was really like my mother. Maybe because she is a kindergarten teacher? She was caring. She always asked me questions like, "Are you warm enough?" "You want to have a bath now?" "Are you hungry?" "What should we eat for dinner tonight?" "Have you not tried this yet? Then, let's go tomorrow!" kind of things. She was very passionate. (S9)

S6 points out the special attributes of these volunteer host families. As an example of being cared for, S6 refers to breakfast being prepared for her. S9 recalls her enthusiastic host mother always asking S9 various questions, related to caring for her. Further, students feel welcomed by their family as illustrated in the following quotes:

> Oh, it was really good. It was good. They welcomed me. They made me feel like being a part of the family as well. […] my host parents were really warm, they were really nice. They welcomed me. Um, yeah, that's the main thing I remember. (S8)

> The family itself was really nice. They gave me my own room, they gave me own space, I guess. Yeah, they were very nice about everything. I could ask them anything and they explained things for me. Yeah, they were really understanding and helpful, uh, I guess. (S1)

> It was interesting to experience the kind of like family life culture in the family in Japan? Yeah, obviously I have never done it before so it was interesting to just be a part of the normal life? Everyday life as a family. I felt welcomed into the family. (S2)

> Ah, you know [homestay is] interesting. It is interesting because they are total strangers and willing to take you in and treat you like their own child, I guess? It is very welcoming and quite warming as well. (S4)

The above comments contain similar expressions, which outline the fundamental attitudes that the host families have shown towards their students. They are warm, helpful, understanding, and welcoming. It is clear that these host parents try to look after their students by providing services that go far beyond just accommodation and meals. These host parents try to assist their students with other aspects to make their stay comfortable. As highlighted in the literature review (2.3.1), homestay students hold certain expectations about being treated as a family member as opposed to a boarder, and whether or not the expectations are fulfilled is an influential factor in their evaluation of homestay experience (Campbell, 2004; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). They show great satisfaction when they feel integrated into the host family. It is a prominent feature of the present study that students are overwhelmingly satisfied with this aspect of their homestay experience.

Another noteworthy point that comes out of comments from S2 and S4 is the adjective "interesting" being used repeatedly to express their reactions towards the actual homestay experience. They knew in theory that they were to live with Japanese families to experience the lifestyle. Nonetheless, the actuality of suddenly living with strangers who treat them as a family member was a little surprising. Even though they knew they were supposed to expect to be treated as a family member, the warmth of the welcome they experienced was a pleasant surprise. Such feelings are reflected in the multiple use of "interesting." As S4 puts it, "they are total strangers and willing to take you in and treat you like their own child." This treatment in turn creates parent-child relational dynamics, which entail not only the students' perceiving that they are being cared for but feeling perplexed at being treated as a child. This aspect will be explored further in section 6.3.

The students' feelings about being welcomed as a family member also lead to perceptions of being integrated into the local household. This simultaneously creates the feeling of being a cultural insider. The followings were responses when asked about their views on good things about homestay. These comments illustrate how these students distinguish themselves from ordinary tourists:

> Good things [about homestay] are, you can get to experience Japan at a deeper level than a tourist level. So, you can actually get to live in a Japanese person's house and live like Japanese person and eat what they usually eat with them as a family. (S3)
>
> Good things are having the experience that a regular tourist would just NOT have. Like, coming home and then sitting under the, ah, what is the name of the hot sheet and table thing?
> (Interviewer: you mean *kotatsu*?)
> That's right, *kotatsu* with the host family and two sausage dogs watching Japanese television. (S4)
>
> Good things [about homestay] would be that you get to experience daily life in a different country. I mean in Japan. Like, rather than being a tourist? you get to experience the little daily things, very important, and you get a better understanding of the culture. (S5)
>
> The family was nice and they become your new friends and you get to experience things with your family […] and you get to visit things together. As opposed to having a touristy experience, you can get to go to these places together. (S7)
>
> They [host families] provide homey things, you know, that you cannot expect if you stay in a youth hostel. Not sure, but, you know, they are just like families rather than just strangers. (S6)

The above comments indicate that these students strongly believed that the homestay enabled them to gain experiences that are different from tourists. S3 uses a phrase, "get to experience Japan at a deeper level than a tourist level." S4 describes her experience with her Japanese family as "the experience that a regular tourist would just not have" by putting strong stress on the word "not." These may be "the little daily things," a phrase used by S5, such as sitting at a *kotatsu*[16] with the family as described in S4's comment. A *kotatsu* is typically placed in a living room in front of a TV where the family gather at the end of the day. Thus, S4's story

[16] *Kotatsu* is a low table with a heater inside covered with a blanket, which is a symbolic winter item in a Japanese house.

about sitting there with the family and dogs portrays S4 as being well-integrated within the family. These comments collectively illustrate that these students perceive an advantage of homestay as the immersion in Japanese culture and customs by participating in everyday family activities. The particular perception simultaneously leads to establishing their identity not as a tourist but as a cultural insider.

In summary, these homestays indeed offer an environment where Japanese parents look after the host students as an honorary family member. This coincides with concepts in the SA and homestay publications examined in Chapter 4. One similarity in the publications for both groups was the use of the word "a family member." Right from the recruitment stage, the host universities ask Japanese families to host an exchange student as a family member while students are told that the host family welcomes them on that basis. Accordingly, students expect to experience Japanese family life, yet the actuality appears to exceed their expectations. In addition, the way the students distance themselves from tourists echoes a point articulated in SA publications. The emphasis placed on the idea that going on student exchange is more than just travelling as a tourist but living as a local may have influenced students' expectations. The way these students overwhelmingly view the homestay as enabling them to become a cultural insider suggests that their actual experience has met such expectations.

6.3 The parent-child dynamics

Instant host family formation entails extending host parental roles while assigning the students the role of an honorary son or daughter. Consequently, this creates parent-child relational dynamics, which have resulted in both positive and negative reactions among the students. As discussed in the preceding section, the emotional warmth from being cared for as well as the feeling of being a part of the host family are perceived positively. On the other hand, students react negatively to the restrictions on their freedom which come with being treated as a child.

The parent-child dynamics are manifested in both language use and certain daily episodes. Regarding language, the use of a particular Japanese term 子 *ko* deserves attention. The Japanese noun *ko* literally means "a child" or "a kid." To refer to their host students, host

parents often used this term, rather than the student's name, pronouns (i.e., she, he) or other options. Even though they never used terms such as our/my kid, they referred to their host student as *"ano ko"* (that kid), *"...suru ko"* (a kid who does …), and *"...shinai ko"* (a kid who does not …) and so on. *Gakusei* (student), *kare* or *kanojo* (he or she), the student's first name, *ojōsan* (a young woman), *ryūgakusei* (exchange student), *honnin* (himself or herself) and *kata* (a politer version for person) are also used to describe the student. The interview transcripts were examined to quantify the terms used by host parents. Table 9 shows the result:

Table 9: Frequency of terms used by host parents to refer to their homestay students

Term	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8	H9	Total
Ko (a child)	18	11	19	17	6	19	5	6	4	105 (58 %)
Gakusei (student)	6	0	2	3	7	3	7	1	1	30 (17 %)
Kare,kanojo (he or she)	2	0	0	2	1	2	7	0	13	27 (15 %)
First name	1	2	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	8 (4 %)
Ojōsan (a young woman)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	7	8 (4 %)
Ryūgakusei (exchange student),	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (1 %)
Honnin (himself or herself)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1 (1 %)
Kata (a person)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1 (1 %)

Clearly, *ko* predominates compared with the other alternatives. Most people use the term *ko* except for H9. The case of H9 will be discussed later when family composition is taken into consideration. When *gakusei* is uttered, it tends to refer to a group of students as a collective entity rather than the particular student who stayed with the host family. An example includes "students go to a school during the day," which described what all the students were scheduled to do in the program. Furthermore, what is particularly noteworthy is that *ko* is used for their own host student as opposed to *gakusei* which is used to refer to students in other households. For instance, while a host parent refers to their own host student as *ano ko*

(that kid), or *uchini kita ko* (a kid who came to our home), *ko* is never used for students other than their own students. They are often referred to as *hokano gakusei-san* (other students), which suggests that these host parents clearly distinguish their students from the other students. Therefore, it implies the host parents only attach special feelings to their own students. Simultaneously, the word choice of *ko* reinforces the idea that these host parents, consciously or unconsciously, assign their student the role of child in the family.

Along with these host parents assigning their student the role of child is their assumed parental role. Accordingly, displays of general concern for their students' welfare are prominent in some daily episodes. One salient concern is to do with students' health. Because it was winter time in Japan, many were worried about whether their students were warm enough. In the following cases, while H4 worries about her student being lightly dressed, H7 and H9 are concerned about whether their host students will warm themselves enough by taking a hot bath:

> あの子はすごく薄着で、寒かったのに薄着でも平気なのにびっくりしました。朝「おはよう」って T シャツとか半袖の薄手のもの着ていて、学校に行こうとするんですね。私から見たら、服持ってこなかったのか、本当に寒くないのかって、感じで。「服持って来てないなら貸してあげるよ。本当に今日はすごく寒いから。」って言ったんですが、「大丈夫です。」って。「大丈夫」って、よくいう子だったんですが。本当に寒い日とかでもシャツ１枚の時は風邪引くんじゃないかって心配で心配で。でも、何回やり取りしても「私はこれで本当に大丈夫なんです。」って、譲りませんでしたね。（笑）
>
> That kid was really lightly dressed. I was surprised that she was OK in her light weight clothes even though it was cold. When we said good morning, she was wearing things like short-sleeved thin material clothes and T-shirt. She was trying to go to school like that. From my perspective, it is like, either she did not bring her clothes or she does not really feel cold. I said, "If you did not bring clothes, I will let you borrow mine. Really, it is extremely cold today." She said, "It's all right." She often said "It's all right." She was wearing only one layer of shirt even on a really cold day so I was really worried that she may catch a cold. But, no matter how many times we communicated about this, she insisted, "I am really all right like this." She would not give in. (laugh) (H4)

「湿気が多いから、夜はちゃんと体洗って、お風呂で体温めないと、体によくないよ」って、彼女に言ったんですね。彼女が「何分つかればいいんですか。」って言うので、「今日は10分つかりなさい。」とか言って。（笑）

I told her, “Humidity is high, so it is not good for you if you don’t wash your body and warm up yourself in the bath.” She says, “How many minutes should I stay in the bath?” so I say things like “Today, stay in the bathtub for 10 minutes.” (laugh) (H7)

寒い時期だったので、熱い湯船につかってあったまるように言って、「分かりました。」とは言うんですが、湯船を使った感じがなかったので多分一度もつからなかったような気がするんですが。

It was the cold season so I told her to dip herself into the hot bathtub to warm up her body. She said, “I understand,” but, I got the impression that she did not use the bath tub. She does not seem to have dipped herself into the bath once. (H9)

The above narratives illustrate how a student getting cold was a common concern among host mothers. H4 repeatedly fails to convince her student that it is extremely cold outside and she should put on something warmer. H4’s student may have truly felt all right, but a mild annoyance shows when H4 says “No matter how many times […] she would not give in.” This incident highlights how the host mother was extremely concerned with keeping her student warm, which in turn made it difficult for her to accept the student’s decision. It is harder to imagine that one would persistently insist on more clothes for another adult, hence this interaction between H4 and her student is more like that between a mother and a child. Furthermore, the last two bath-related stories contain noteworthy content and linguistic features. The importance of taking a hot bath in winter time is culturally embedded in Japanese society. It may be strange for Australians from a sub-tropical city to be told to warm up one’s body by soaking in hot bath water for a nominated time. However, from a Japanese perspective, it can be interpreted as a manifestation of the host mothers’ concern about their students’ health. Furthermore, the imperative sentence structure, “*tsukarinasai*” that H7 uses to tell her student to stay in the bathtub, deserves attention. This imperative Japanese expression is often used by parents telling their children what to do. One would not use it with someone who is simply a guest. Hence, telling a student what to do in this way clearly suggests a parental stance.

Although bath-related stories generated few comments from students, many reacted to "must-phone" requests. While this topic was brought up by only one host family, it was raised by five students, either from their own experience or from fellow students' stories. Host parents' requests for courtesy phone calls prompted negative reactions from students. The following quote is S8's response to a question about things that she wishes she had known before she went to the homestay:

> Um, maybe, how to phone? […] We had to phone our host mothers lots. Other exchange students were also saying, "I have to ring my host mum," "She told me to ring what time." (S8)

Apparently S8 and her fellow students had to phone their host mothers to say what time they were coming home or when they were on the way home. The fact that the students make comments about needing to phone indicates that this was unexpected for them. These students have classes until about 3 PM on weekdays and sometimes go out afterwards with Japanese volunteer students or other exchange students. Although there may be a few occasions where they are late, the students usually return to their homes for dinner. It is understandable that a host mother needs to know if the student will not be eating dinner at home. However, the data suggest that host parents' phone call requests are concerned with more than this practical need. For example, S4 had to ring her host mother every day just to say she was on her way home. In fact, it was this obligation that S4 and S9 raised when asked about "not-so-good things" about the homestay experience:

> I didn't have any bad experiences. It's language wise. I'm sure that it would have been different if I had a bit more Japanese. One thing was that my host mother made me call her every afternoon? When coming home, every day? Every afternoon call her so she knew that I was on my way home.
> (Interviewer: you mean from a public phone?)
> No. I just used my mobile. She just wanted to know every time when I was on my way home. (S4)

> Not-so-good things? Um, Maybe, one thing will be, you must be comfortable. You must ring your homestay family to tell them what time you come home and something like that. Some families have a curfew, like 11 or 12, you know. Freedom? I was OK

> because I wanted to spend time with my host family so I went out with girls in the afternoon. I always came home on time to help prepare dinner with my host mum. Some people don't like it. (S9)

S4's frowning facial expression when she said "my host mother made me call" as well as repeating "every" four times suggest her negative reaction towards the request. S9 describes the uncomfortable feelings some students raised about the sudden restriction imposed on their independence. Such students' negative reactions towards loss of freedom resonate with similar findings about perceptions among Australian post-secondary Rotary exchange students (Okazaki-Luff, 1992), American university students in Japanese homestays (Shikaura, 2007) and American university students in Spanish and Mexican homestays (Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). These Australian and American students share a similar belief that they should be regarded as adults. Accordingly, students find it difficult, whether in a short-term or longer-term homestays, to be given curfews and/or to be required to constantly inform hosts about their whereabouts, which they consider childish treatment. These host parents' behaviours illustrate that they assume the parental roles although such parent-child dynamics are not always configured in the same manner among the participants. Several factors can affect the family dynamics: age, family composition and gender.

6.3.1 Age of students

The age group of these students may create a tricky situation as they are mostly at least 18 years old. Three participants are aged 18, four aged 19, and the other two are 20 and 21. Eighteen is the age of adulthood in Australia, whereas 20 is when one legally becomes an adult in Japan. Hence, there exists a cross-cultural difference. In fact, the following comment from the youngest host mother among the participants reinforces the idea that being under age 20 would influence the way host families treat their student:

> うちに来た学生さんは、他の学生さんと比べて年が上のほうで、もう成人していましたし、もう大人なんですよね。私も一人の大人として扱ったつもりなので、あまり私もオーストラリア人とか日本人とか考えたことはなかったんですよね。

> The student who came to our house was older than other students and he was already over 20 so he was an adult. I tried to treat him as an adult so I never thought so much about his being an Australian or Japanese. (H5)

This comment was made when she was asked if she had learnt something or changed her perception about Australia. It highlights the fact that age 20 marks adulthood in Japan.

On the other hand, age 18 marks adulthood in Australia. Accordingly, these Australian students, who are all 18 or over, have some expectation of being treated as an adult. However, what they experienced in the homestay is different from the idea they have about being 18. The gap is manifested in their comments as a surprising experience. When responding to the question of whether there were any surprising or funny moments they experienced during homestay, three students brought up their older host siblings. S6 describes the fact that three adult children still live in the host family household as "the most surprising thing" when she first arrived there:

> I was a little surprised about my host family in general because my three host sister and brothers were quite old, 26, 28 and 31. They still live in the same house. I was under an impression that in Japan people of that age would have moved out of their house by that stage. So, I was not sure if I was seeing all of them, but I did! (laugh) That was the most surprising thing when I first arrived there. I was actually having a chat about the topic with my host brother and said, "There is no way I will be living in my house when I am 26. I want to move out by then." He said that he has already tried when he was working in Tokyo. Things were so different in Tokyo compared with Osaka so he preferred it at home. (S6)

In Japan, it is not uncommon that adult unmarried children still live with their parents just as in the case of S6's host family. By contrast, it is more common in Australia that adults of that age group would move out of the family home to live independently, often in share accommodation.[17] Although 19 year old S6 still lives with her family back in Australia, she

[17] The Australian data for 2009 show that the proportion of the population aged 20-24 living with their parents was 46.6 %. The figure for those aged 25-34 decreased to 12.7 %. (ABS, 2012). The comparable Japanese data combine the two age groups into one as 20-34 and show that the proportion in 2009 was 48.6 % for males and 46.6 % for females. (Ministry of internal affairs, 2012). These official national statistics are indicative of the general trend that adult children are more likely to live with their parents in their family home in Japan.

hopes to be living independently in the near future. To her, mid to late 20s and early 30s is too old for the host siblings to be living in the family house. Moving out from home is exactly what S4 has already done, which surprised her host parents:

> They [host family] asked me lots of questions about where I live and how I live. I moved out of my house when I was 18 and went completely independent. Now I live with my boyfriend. They just could not believe it. […] When I was explaining how I live, like, They were like "Really, really?" I moved out of my home when I was 17, like, well, almost 18. You know, I went completely independent, like, financially as well. So, my host family was really surprised when I told them, "I live with my boyfriend." They just couldn't believe it. If I cook, he cleans. If he cooks, I clean. I was explaining all these, how we work out these things, and they were going, "Oh," "Ah," "Really, really?!" (laugh) (S4)

The above story depicts how surprised S4's host family was about her independent living back in Australia. In contrast, it is not just the living arrangements of adult children but the amount of care they receive that has caught S4's attention. She is surprised how much her host brother is being looked after by the mother:

> He was 30 or something? Yet mum looked after him so well, breakfast, she packed him lunch. (laugh) (S4)

This view echoes the reaction reported by S6, who is in disbelief about how little her adult host sisters contribute to the household chores:

> I have been doing my washing since I was 15! But, like, the daughters? They don't do anything! They don't do their washing. They were like, 21 and 25! They let their mum do their washing. My host mum was even making *obentō* (lunchbox) for them. Everything was like, my mother stopped making my lunch when I was 12. I felt rude, a little bit, sometimes? You know, host mother always made dinner, and then she always washed up afterwards? She was working from home, you know. She had this hair dresser salon next to her house. (S7)

Note how S7 compares her host sisters to herself, emphasising the fact that she is much more independent. S7 views her working host mother as doing too many daily chores. Simultaneously, she is critical of her host sisters for doing very little and being dependent on their mother.

These comments collectively show a different way of seeing the world for this age group of students. These students see themselves as more independent than their host siblings. Being 18 or over means being more independent than their counterparts in Japan, but the age is still perceived as a child by host parents. Such fundamental differences are considered to cause the particular way that the host parents treat their students, and the students' surprised reactions.

6.3.2 Family composition

The make-up of family including the age of host parents is likely to affect the relational dynamics. H5 explicitly commented that she treated her student as an adult. This host family comprised a husband (age 41), wife (age 38) and their toddler child, making them the youngest couple amongst the participants. In this configuration, another person aged over 20 is less likely to be considered as a child than in other host family situations.

A similar principle applies to H9's household. H9 is the host mother mentioned earlier when various terms used to refer to host students are discussed. She used the pronoun *kanojo*, "she" rather than *ko*, "a child." The family had primary school aged children. In addition, their father was away on a business trip for the first week of the homestay period. Therefore, the student was viewed more like another adult or a young woman as referred to by the host mother in this family configuration. It is noted that H9's corresponding student said that her birth mother in Australia often rang her on her mobile just to ensure she was all right. This suggests that she was perhaps less independent than some of the other students. This 19 year old student made no complaint about being treated like a child by her host family. On the other hand, S4, who is also 19, negatively recounted her host mother's phone requests. Hence, different levels of independence were observable among the students.

Another influence on students' reactions was the different household composition between the Japanese home and their home in Australia. S8 (age 19), who is usually one of six children, was overwhelmed by her experience as the only child in the host family:

> I don't know if this is a bad thing, but they really paid lots of attention to me? Like "here is your breakfast" and saying things like "make sure to eat this and that" and "make sure you call when you will come home" and things like that, maybe a bit overprotective? But, it may be because they want to be sure where I am and nothing happens? So they are not liable for that? But, that's good anyway. You know back home, my parents are not like that. They have six kids so their attentions are really not, not sure, um, separated? You know, the attention has to be shared, so it was a little bit different, having all those attentions just on me. So, yeah, it was a little bit different. (S8)

When asked about "not-so-good things" about her homestay experience, S8 who suddenly became an "only child," describes the intensive attention paid to her. S8 is careful with her wording by stating "I don't know if this is a bad thing" about being the focus of her host parents' attention. S8 still finds it overprotective though she follows the instruction to call her host parents to let them know when she expects to return home. Nevertheless, the following incident recounted by S8 further highlights how even a phone call does not totally relieve a host parent's concern for their student's safety:

> Um, oh, there was this one time. We went to Karaoke. I went out to Karaoke with the girls, but I had to leave early. You know we ended up staying until about 8:30 and I lived about an hour away. So I ran to the station and made sure that I got home and stuff. My homestay mum was waiting outside for me. I went like, *gomennasai, gomennasai, gomennasai, gomennasai*! (sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry!) She said something like "That's OK as long as you are safe." She was outside waiting for me. I was really surprised that she stood there and waited. It was getting cold.
>
> (Interviewer: What time was that?)
>
> Ah, it was, about 11? Yeah, 11 o'clock. I had to leave early. The girls were still singing.
>
> (Interviewer: Did you ring them?)

> Yeah, I rang. I rang to say that I would be late. She said "OK." Our house was close to the station. But, she was still waiting outside anyway. I was really surprised that she would do that. She was like, relieved. "You are safe" kind of expression. (S8)

As S8's home is close to the station, her host mother may have come out after hearing the train pass by. It is very cold standing outside a house around 11 PM in December as it is one of the coldest months in Japan. Yet despite the phone call, she waits outside to ensure S8's safe arrival. S8 added elsewhere that there were plenty of street lights between the station and her home. In addition, train commuters are still out and about coming home around 11 PM in a Japanese city, thus creating a relatively safe environment. Therefore, this incident portrays a particular display of worry. That is, it is a parent worrying about S8 as a child, not as an adult. On the other hand, the student is taken aback with total surprise. From her perspective, she has phoned and even left earlier than other students. It is beyond her expectation that the mother waits outside their house in the freezing wintertime. S8's reaction clearly shows a mismatch between her expectation and her actual experience.

In summary, the host family composition including host parents' ages and their birth children's ages are factors that may alter the relational dynamics. When the host parents are relatively young and their birth children are much younger than the host student, it is less likely to generate parent-child dynamics. From students' perspectives, family size may also create a gap between their treatment in their Australian and host family homes.

6.3.3 Gender

Students' gender is also an influential factor. Only female students raised issues about being treated as a child. In addition, H4, H7, and H9, who worried about their student's clothing choice and length of bathing time, all hosted female students (one was 18 and the other two were 19). By contrast, three host parents with male students (one was 20 and the other two were 18) reported no particular similar incidents. Therefore, two explanations are plausible: regardless of age, host parents may be more protective towards female students and/or male students are less likely to be treated as children.

Furthermore, a contrast is noted between male and female students regarding their reactions to their older host siblings. S4, S6 and S7, who are surprised by their host siblings in their late 20s and early 30s still being dependent in the family home, are all female students. On the other hand, one male student who also lived with a family in similar circumstances (S2 was 18, and his host sisters were 29 and 32) did not seem to have found their situation particularly surprising. Unlike the female students, he made no comment about the fact that they still live with the family or depended on their mother doing house chores. Hence, female students may be more sensitive to the gendered nature of the work in the home than male counterparts. They also may be more sensitive to the idea about being independent from their parents.

It is prudent not to generalise this and limit analysis as there are only two male students in this project. Nevertheless, what has emerged from these differences is that a student's gender may be a factor that alters the relational dynamics. On one hand, the gender difference is likely to influence the way host parents treat them and there may be gaps in students' perceptions on the other.

In summary, observable parent-child relational dynamics may be generated by factors such as age, family composition and gender. Host parents can place these young adult Australian students back in a child's position. Consequently, some students react negatively to restrictions on their freedom which seem more appropriate to a child. These findings highlight differences in understandings between what being "part of the family" means to host parents and their students. It is indeed easy to say to a student that they are going to become a family member. However, when the notion of family and the way they behave are different (i.e., the new host family dynamics revert the student to child status), it creates difficulties with the experiences.

6.4 Role of dinner time in family life

Dinner time is one of the topics that were frequently brought up by both students and host families. It was salient that dinner time played a pivotal role in creating the family bonding opportunity in these Japanese homestay settings. Host families seem to hold certain expectations about the functions of dinner time, which affects their perceptions of students' appropriate behaviours as family members. On the other hand, the data showed that the

students held dissimilar perceptions. The differences in the way the host parents and the students recounted their dinner time experiences indicate fundamentally differing expectations with regard to the role of this mealtime in family life.

6.4.1 Dinner time as bonding time

The students attended language and culture classes at the host university in the daytime during the week, so dinner times were opportunities to gather apart from weekend family outings. Therefore, the dinner table potentially provides a venue for the family bonding opportunity. The particular function of dinner time, however, may not necessarily be viewed in the same way by both host parents and students. Indeed, even though dinner time came up as a topic for both parties, the issues raised within the topic were not the same. In fact, problematic cases were brought up only by some host parents. What emerged from students' comments is how pleasantly they were surprised by the bonding experience at dinner time. When asked what they remembered most about the homestay, five out of nine students brought up mealtime, particularly dinner time as follows:

> Um, Definitely, I think dinner time most. We talked a lot over dinner.
> (The interviewer: What did you talk about?)
> Um, we usually talked about what we've done for the day and sometimes we talked about language […] We talked about other cultural things, we talked about lots of different stuff. I guess our main interactions we had were at night time. You know, we left early in the morning, quickly ate breakfast and left for the day and did not come home until night time. (S1)

> Um, everything. Meals at homestay? The family dinner […] The way of living in Japan? (S3)

> Lots. Hard to pick one. Different breakfast, dinner, trying hard to communicate. (S4)

> Remember most? Everything, oh, dinner times! Helping the host mother? I helped mum lots in the kitchen. I learned lots of most practical things […] Anyway, dinner time was the main thing I remember. We talked about the day. (S7)

> I remember everything (laugh) but maybe, my host mum? […] I go home, leave stuff in my room upstairs and I quickly go downstairs to the kitchen. Then, we prepare the meal together. Yeah, helping mum prepare dinner, eat together and talk. (S9)

Some had difficulty in deciding what to nominate, saying "everything" when asked about what they remember most, but they all bring up dinner time in the end. Though S9 refers to her caring host mum as salient in her memory, she goes on to talk about preparing meals together, eating together and talking in her story. Throughout her narrative, she conveys warm family solidarity achieved by sharing these small daily activities. Dinner time stands out in these students' minds for a combination of reasons (e.g., dishes being different as will be discussed in Chapter 8), but as articulated in S1's comment, the conversation seems to be the key element. In the cases of S7 and S9, helping their host mother with the meal preparation provided even more opportunities to share daily activities. In these contexts, dinner time is more than just eating together. The functions include sharing their daily experiences by talking about simple things such as what students did. These conversations can contribute to building a family rapport between students and the host family. These students are mostly beginners or have a lower intermediate level of Japanese. In particular, beginner students such as S1 and S4 reportedly struggled to hold conversations in Japanese; in the above quote, S4 says "trying hard to communicate." Nevertheless, they have basic vocabulary knowledge and enough sentence structures to communicate about their days with help from a dictionary. Despite some language difficulties, the participants fondly recall various talks over dinner.

These students remember the mealtime most for a number of reasons, but in S1's case, perhaps it is because it is different from what happens back home in Australia. Mealtimes may be less important in Australia for their bonding function and in talking about the day. S1, who enjoyed dinner time, further elaborates his view of Japanese family life by comparing it with his family life in Australia:

> I thought their [Japanese] lifestyle is more, I thought more focused on their career. At night, in the streets, people are coming home late. On the other hand, they were more family orientated at home than I had expected. In my house in Australia, we just have tea while watching TV. Mum usually brings home wine every night (laugh). So, I

> guess, in my Japanese host family, we actually sat down with the TV off and talked, which was really good. It was different from what happens in my house. I am not sure how everyone else does, yeah, stronger family unit, I guess. The grandchildren sometimes joined us for dinner. They were noisy, but OK. It was really good. (S1)

S1 spoke very carefully and slowly, trying to search for the right words to describe his impressions of his host family experience. Even though he states that he is unsure about other families, he still links his personal experience to what he sees as a Japanese cultural value of family life. His view is that his Japanese family conversed more at dinner, thus exhibiting stronger unity than at his home in Australia. Without generalising this as the trend in Australia, it is nonetheless not unknown in Australian households to sit in front of a television at mealtime. In the above quote, he twice utters "It was really good" about the fact that they talked at the dinner table. For S1, it was a pleasant surprise as this particular function of family mealtime was not expected based on his usual practice in Australia. He particularly seems to have enjoyed feeling like a part of the family through these conversations. In this case, having grandchildren who lived next door join the dinner further facilitated lively conversations, thus strengthening the warm ambience in an extended family gathering.

The view of dinner time as the chance to talk about the day also emerges from host families' stories. It is noteworthy that, while students never bring up problems about dinner time, problematic cases are mentioned by host parents. Simultaneously, the comments from host parents reinforce the idea that sharing students' daily activities forms an important part of conversations over dinner. As H1 and H9 put it:

> あそこはお茶室とかもあるし、クラブも空手とかすもうとか色々あって、学校でやってきた事で食事の時色々話して盛り上がれるんですよ（笑）これがただ日本語を勉強して帰ってきたとなると、それは文化じゃないじゃないですか。だから、白い胴着着て合気道やってきたとか、今日書道やってきたとか話が出て、そこから話が広がっていく感じ。
>
> The university has a tea ceremony room and various clubs such as *Karate* and *Sumo* so we have lively conversations (laugh) about what they did at the school during mealtimes. If they only study Japanese language and then come home, it isn't culture, is it? So, they tell us things like "I wore the white uniform to do martial arts," "I did

calligraphy today." etc. Then it is like we expand our conversations from there. (H1/HM)

大体彼女は夕方帰ってきていたので、一緒にご飯食べて話して宿題して、どこどこ行ったとか、何か初めて見たとか、そんなに大したことも話してはいないんですけれどね。

She usually came home in the evening so we ate dinner together, talked and did homework. We did not talk about anything much, things like where she went and if she saw something for the first time. (H9)

H1's voice gets louder when she comments "we have lively conversations" indicating that such talks are valued at their dinner table. Elsewhere she mentions that their student was a beginner, had very limited language skills and they often consulted their electronic dictionaries during their conversations. Nonetheless, clearly the language barrier is not an issue. What matters are the mutual efforts to converse about their day. Though H9 does not provide as many details of topics as H1, the conversations are basically about her host student's days. H9's host student has been studying Japanese since high school and reportedly the student and H9 could relatively easily hold conversations. These students may have different proficiency levels and personalities, but regardless, dinner time conversation is clearly expected as the ideal. Indeed, it is when students do not talk that stories are passed on to other families as problematic situations. For example, in the following comment, hear-say stories about students who stay silent at mealtime are raised:

８年間にわたって４回経験しました。うちに来る学生さんは、みんな結構喋れる子達で、他のホストファミリーの方が言っていましたけど、喋れない人は本当に喋れないからうちでも黙って下向いているとかって。一緒にご飯食べながら、シーンと、もくもく食べてるだけみたいな。うちに来る学生さんは、みんなコミュニケーションする上でそんなに困る事はなかったですね。

I have experienced homestays four times in eight years. All the students who came to our home could speak [Japanese] fairly well. Other host families were telling me about a person who couldn't speak really couldn't speak so they kept silent and looked down. It is like, while eating meals together, they keep silent. They just eat in

silence. As for all the students who have come to our home, I did not have that many problems in communicating with them. (H5)

H5 describes her past students as speaking "fairly well," presenting not many communication problems. On the other hand, she contrasts them with students in other homes who stay quiet. Even though she links the reason for their silence to their language skills, what is clear is that silence while eating meals together is considered as undesirable. This in turn implies her expectation of interaction over dinner. In a similar vein, H7, a first time host mother, contrasts her own home situation to other households. Based on her own experience and what we might term "horror stories" in other households that she had heard about, H7 has an opinion on the role of interactions at mealtime in these homestays:

受け入れるホスト側として、こうしたほうがいいと思ったのは、お食事の時は出来るだけ会話をしたほうがいいなと。食事の時が一番顔を合わせるので。色々、お互いのことを分かり合うチャンスというか、まあ学生さんは一人でこちらの家庭に飛び込んでくるわけですから、こちらから色々話をして場を盛りあげてあげるようにしないと、かわいそうだと思うんですよ。まあ私の所はたまたますごくうるさいというか（笑）にぎやかなお嬢さんだったんで、よくぞ来てくださいましたみたいな感じだったんですけど。他のうちで食事の時に全然喋らない学生さんもいると聞いたので。一言も喋らなかったとか、テレビだけ見てたとかいう家庭もあったみたいなんで。恥ずかしがっているだけだと思うんですよ。でも、頑張らないと、学生さんも。それは受け入れ側も注意したほうがいいなと思いますね。それは学生さんも受け入れ側も留意しておくべきだと思います。

As a host family, what I thought we should do is, we had better have conversations as much as possible at mealtimes. Mealtimes are the time when we see each other most. It is the opportunity for us to get to know each other. Well those students jump into these households by themselves so unless we [host families] talk about various things and make efforts to hold lively conversations for them, I feel sorry for them. The person who came to our house happened to be a very loud (laugh) lively young woman. So, she was very welcome. I heard that some students in other houses do not talk at all at mealtimes. It seems that there were households where they did not speak a word or they did nothing but watch television. I think they are just being shy. But,

students must also do their best. I think that host families should be careful with it. I think that both students and host families should keep it in their minds. (H7)

This comment was brought up when asked for any advice for the host families next year. Reportedly, her host student was not that fluent in Japanese, but she was able to have basic conversations. As H7 was able to speak English, she was sometimes able to mix English into their conversations. She describes her own host student as "loud" and "lively" with amicable laughs, suggesting that it had positive effects on their holding lively conversations. On the other hand, she sees it as a problem if students and host families do not have enough interaction over dinner. H7 is sympathetic towards students, speculating that a part of the reason for their silence is shyness. At the same time, she raises an issue about responsibilities that students must assume. In other words, H7 underscores the effort that both students and host families must make to get these conversations going. Underlying this opinion seems to be an assumption that conversation is a crucial function of dinner time in these Japanese homes. Indeed, the following story from H6 further underscores that these Japanese host mothers value, and thus expect conversations to take place between the host family members and their students over dinner. H6, who has just hosted her tenth student in the program, is enthusiastically conscientious about making their time together mutually enjoyable. She has generally enjoyed her experience each year and cherishes fond memories. Unfortunately, she reports one exceptional case as follows:

数年前に受け入れた子は、実は日本に1年間留学して8月に帰っていてまた11月にこの短期に参加してうちにホームステイしたんですが、何も興味を示さなかったんで困りましたね。[…] 言葉は出来てうちでテレビ見て漫才を笑ってたぐらいでしたから […] ご飯食べながら「今日どうだった？」って聞いても「楽しかった。」だけで、もうそれだけなんですよ。会話しようともしない感じだったんです。

It is about the kid that I hosted several years ago. He actually came to Japan on a one-year exchange, went back to Australia in August and then participated in this program in November. He stayed in our house, but he showed no interest in anything. We got distressed about that. […] He was competent in Japanese, so much that he could watch and laugh at Japanese stand-up comedians. […] Even when I asked while eating dinner, "How were things today?" All he said was "It was fun." That's all he said and he did not even try to have a conversation. (H6)

"How were things today?" "It was fun." At the surface level, the exchange does not seem problematic. Possibly this particular student did not see his response as posing any problem, thinking that it was a sufficient reply about his day. In Australia, generally speaking, a short response is common among teenage boys in particular. For H6, however, it was not satisfactory. Her expressions such as "All he said was …," "That's all he said" and "he did not even try to have a conversation" clearly show that she expected him to give more than a formulaic response and attempt to hold more conversations to share his experiences for the day. Despite her efforts in trying to initiate a conversation, the student did not reciprocate. The fact that he had sufficient language skills seems to have made the incident worse and consequently left H6 with an unpleasant memory. In other words, while H6 expects conversations at family mealtime, this student may not have the same idea, thus closing off opportunities for conversations.

In summary, dinner table can be the key venue where host families and the students talk and foster solidarity as a family in these homestay households. The issue that emerges, however, is that different expectations sometimes exist between host parents and students with regard to the role of dinner time in the family. While the occasion is expected to facilitate bonding through conversations by the host family, host students do not necessarily see this as a significant function of family dinner. Without generalising to all Australian families, nonetheless, based on the comments from these students, bonding through dinner time conversations is probably not considered as essential in their usual family lives back home. On the other hand, in these short-term Japanese homestay contexts, host parents do not simply serve dinner, but rather consciously utilise the dinner time for interactions. This gap can be considered as the cause underlying these different reactions among the participants.

6.4.2 Missing dinner

Given the important role of dinner time in family life discussed in 6.4.1, this section focuses on the implications of missing dinner. The host universities' homestay guidelines explain to both parties about house rules. The students are told to respect the house rules and the host families are told to communicate their rules to their students. One of the rules is about notifying the host family if students do not require dinner, which is emphasised in the

guidelines for students. In H1's household, a specific time is agreed upon by when the host family should be notified:

> 我が家のルールは、例えば、6時半頃晩御飯食べるから、出かけるんで晩御飯いらないんだったら、5時までに電話しなくちゃいけないんだけど、それは必ず言ってる。皆そのルールは守ってた。
>
> Our house rule is, for example, we eat around 6:30. So, if they go out and do not need dinner, then they must ring by 5. I make sure to say that and everyone followed the rule. (H1/HF)

This experienced homestay family reports that they have had no major issues as all the students followed their house rules, including this arrangement about phone calls. These phone calls frequently come up in students' stories, indicating that these are common arrangements (see 6.2). In S2's case, when his host mother gave him a phone card to call them, he felt it strange enough to jot down in his journal as a little incident:

> Also, I was given a phone card today and told to call to let them know when I'll be home. This is a little strange - I thought, but not really surprising. It is understandable if they want to know whether to prepare dinner for me or not.
>
> (S2, an extract from journal entries, Day 3)

Nonetheless, S2 understood the need as a practical matter for the host family. Indeed, there are times when students go out with fellow exchange students and/or Japanese volunteer students after university and come home late. An issue with the rule of notifying the family is that it may give the misleading impression that, as long as they let the families know, missing dinner time does not pose a problem. Students might even think that they create less work for the host mothers if they do not have to make a meal for them. On the contrary, the following quotes from two host mothers suggest that this is not the case, and they highlight the fact that they greatly appreciate it when their students come home to eat dinner with the family:

> 前の子はエベントに出かけて晩御飯に帰ってこないこともあったんですけど、あまりそういうのに行かなくてうちにきちんと帰ってきてくれる子でしたね。「今日は出かけ

るからご飯いらない」ばかりじゃ寂しいですよね。まあ、助かるという人もいますけど。私はなにか娘が毎日きちんと帰って料理手伝ってくれて一緒に食べるという感じで、嬉しかったですね。たいしたことしてなくても、「お母さんのご飯美味しかった。」って、食べてくれたのが印象に残ってます。

As for our previous student, there were times when she went out to some events and did not come home for dinner. The latest one did not go to things like that and came home properly. It is sad if the student never needs meals because they go out. Some people say that it is helpful. I was actually happy, feeling as if my daughter came home properly, helped me with cooking and ate together every day. Even though I did not do anything particularly great, she ate and said, “Mother, your meal was delicious.” That made an impression on me. (H3)

あと今回の Ｍ はすごく真面目な子で毎日６時には帰ってきてましたね。流されない子で、今日は渋谷に行ったとか原宿に行ったとか話していて、他の皆はそのままどこかにまた行ったとかいう時でも彼は帰ってきて。お酒を飲まないというのもあって、前の子達は流されてみんなと出かけて酔っ払って帰ってきた子とかもいたんですが、Ｍ は全然そういうことはなかったですね。うちで家族と食事する時ビールを少しついであげたりしたんですが、その時もなかなかへらないんですよ。本当に真面目な子でね、１回だけね、日本人のボランティアの学生さんとかと一緒にお好み焼きやで食事を済ませてきた時があったんですが、それ以外は毎日うちで食事してくれました。

Another thing about the latest kid, M is that he was really a serious kid and came home by 6 PM every day. He was not influenced by others. He told us that he went to *Shibuya* and *Harajuku* among other places. Even when other people went out somewhere else after that, he came home. One reason is that he does not drink. I previously had kids coming home drunk as they were influenced by other students, but he never did anything like that. When we had meals at home, I poured a little beer. Even then, he would not drink it that much. He was really a serious studious kid. Only once did he eat out with Japanese volunteer students at an *okonomiyaki* dining place before coming home. Other than that, he ate meals at home with us every day. (H6)

Both H3 and H6 have hosted many students over the years, and naturally not all the past students exhibited the same attitudes and behaviours. There are clear similarities between these two comments, in which comparisons are made between different behaviours. Both host mothers contrast their latest student with previous ones with regard to family dinner participation. They commend those who join family dinner on the one hand, and implicitly criticise those who miss it on the other. These comments highlight the fact that host mothers appreciate the student playing their expected role as a family member, which is to join them at dinner time. H3 is impressed by her latest student, and this is particularly clear in the way that she repeats the phrase "she came home properly." This, in turn, implies her perception that those who missed the family dinner demonstrated inappropriate behaviour. Such a negative attitude towards students not joining family dinners echoes a part of the findings by Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart (2002). In their study, the Spanish and Mexican host mothers were unhappy about their American students who were occupied with their busy social lives and came home just to sleep. Those behaviours upset the host mothers, who complained that they were not running hotels. They share a similar cultural value with the Japanese host mothers in the present study, in considering dinner time as the family time.

Furthermore, Japanese expressions used in these comments are noteworthy as they reflect the host mothers' favourable perceptions towards students' presence at dinner time. The particular structure "~ *te kureru*" literally means "doing me a favour." H3 said, "*kichinto ieni kaette kitekureru ko*" (a kid who does me a favour by returning home properly) and "*tabete kureta*" (She did me a favour by eating.). In a similar manner, H6 commented about her student, "*uchide shokuji shite kuremashita*," which can be translated as "He did me a favour by eating a meal at home." The use of these expressions sheds light on their appreciative perception of a student who comes home to join the family dinner. In addition, the following quote reinforces the fact that H6 views dinner time as the chance to get together as a family:

> 主人もね、朝早く出て昼間は仕事ですが、晩御飯は一緒に食べるように帰ってくるし […] 楽しんでますよ。
>
> My husband leaves home early in the morning and works during the day, but as for dinner, he also comes home in order to eat together […] He enjoys it, too. (H6)

It is not uncommon that some Japanese company employees work late and come home well after dinner time. Indeed, in other families, there are cases where not all the family members eat together and host fathers come home after students have eaten with the host mother and other family members. The statement, "he also comes home in order to eat together" is noteworthy as it implies that the host father made a conscious effort to join the family dinner. Simultaneously, it illustrates how eating together is valued in this family. Therefore, irrespective of the fact that the house rule is followed, if missing dinner is treated as a matter of just notifying the host, the students may be seen as not valuing family life sufficiently.

In summary, the data suggest that host mothers' expectations are that students join the family dinner rather than missing it. The do and don't lists presented to students in the host universities' publications (see 4.4.1) include a rule about ringing the host family if they do not require dinner. This seemingly common courtesy may create the impression that missing homestay dinner is simply a matter of a phone call. However, students missing dinner may affect the host parents' perceptions, regardless of following the phone call rule, as the expected bonding opportunities would be reduced. Hence, underlying these issues are differing expectations about the role of dinner time within the family between host families and students.

6.5 Instant intimacy

Earlier, in 6.2, I posited that the notion of instant family-ship underpins what these families do for their host students. Simultaneously, the instant family-ship thrusts these students into an intimate family environment. The data analysis has shown that these host parents hold certain expectations about how family life operates. These expectations, however, may not correspond to those of students in the role of temporary family members. A mismatch concerning the limits to family intimacy may generate issues with another salient topic, family laundry.

Laundry topics were raised by about half of the participants: five students and four host parents. It is noted that these interviewees tend to bring up this particular topic when asked about "not-so-good things" about the homestay experience. A particularly notable issue is awkward feelings reported by female students about the family laundry arrangement. Laundry is usually washed together for the whole family on a daily basis in these Japanese

households, but each family had slightly different arrangements when they had their host student. There were two scenarios: either the host mother simply adds the student's washing items to the family laundry or the students are shown how to use the washing machine to do their own laundry. The former applies to S1 and the latter is the case in H9's home below:

> I had a washing basket in my room that I put my clothes in, and brought it out every second day to be washed. (S1)

> 洗濯は、彼女のほうから、「いいですか。」って、聞いてきてくれたので、「どうぞ。」っていう感じで。下の部屋に机もあるし、普段使ってない部屋で、そこで寝て頂いてたんですが、洗濯機と物干し竿が彼女の部屋のすぐ横にあったので、「勝手に使ってね。」って言って、自分が好きな時に使っていたので、そこら辺は不便もなく、問題もなかったと思います。
>
> As for the laundry, she asked, "May I?" so I was like, "please, go ahead." The room downstairs had a desk, we usually do not use the room so she slept in that room. The washing machine and the clothesline were right next to her room. So, I told her to use them whenever she liked and she used them when she wanted. So, I do not think that there was any inconvenience or problem. (H9)

H9, a first time host mother made this comment when asked if there were any "not-so-good aspects" in her homestay experience. She started listing her own checkpoints, by mentioning communication, meal preparation, the change to their lifestyle rhythm, and then she brought up laundry. Even though she says there was no problem, the fact that she had to mention it implies that laundry arrangements potentially created an issue. As H9's host student asked for permission to use the washing machine, the arrangement was made that the student would do her own laundry separately from the family washing. In a sense, the student made the arrangement and solved the potential problem. The data elsewhere shows, however, that these host mothers commonly assume their job is to do all the family washing together. In their mind, the family laundry includes the student's as they are a part of the family. On the other hand, such a role assumed by host mothers may not match the practice familiar to students. The following insightful comment illustrates such a view:

あ！洗濯の習慣が違うということを知りました。オーストラリアでは毎日はしないみたいで日本では洗濯物毎日洗うから服出していいよって言ったら、ちゃんと出してくれたので。毎日ではなかったんですが、２，３日おきに、お洋服とか一通り出してくれたんで家族一緒に洗ってやりやすかったというか、気を使わなくてよかったです。

Ah! I learnt that she has different washing customs. It seems that they do not do washing every day in Australia. I told her that we wash it every day in Japan and told her that she may put her clothes out. Then she put them out properly. It was not every day, but she brought out a range of items like clothes for me every few days so I washed them altogether with all the family's and it was easy for me to manage. So I didn't have to worry. (H4)

H4 understood the student's different washing custom, but she still explains how it is in Japan and asks her student to put out her laundry. H6 emphasises the fact that the student did not put out her washing items every day. Nonetheless, she seems to have been relieved that the student let her handle her washing.[18] The host mother realises the student's expectations about laundry are culturally different though clearly she feels more comfortable doing all the family laundry together. As far as H4 is concerned, it was a part of her daily chores to care for her whole family, including the host student.

By contrast, getting their washing done by a host mother does not necessarily conform to students' expectations, as recounted by S7:

You know, having to do washing all the time? Like, my host mother wanted to do washing for me, but I hate other people doing my washing for me. Especially, clothes washing? But, my host mum wanted to wash clothes for me. I felt awkward. Anyway, I let host mum do the washing for me, but I felt BAD. My host mother doing washing for me. I have been doing my washing since I was 15! (S7)

[18] She says, "*ki o tsukawanakute yokatta desu*," which literally means "I did not have to be considerate." or "I did not have to be sensitive to her feelings." The main verb "*ki o tsukau"* is often argued to be one of the key Japanese expressions that show Japanese people's characteristics. It can be translated as "to be considerate" or "to be sensitive to other's feelings" and the attitudes are required for harmonious communication (Chung, Hara, Yang, & Ryu, 2003, p. 49). It is commonly understood as an uneasy feeling that occurs when it is necessary to worry about someone else's needs. That feeling is also associated with an interpersonal relationship as it signals recognising a person as belonging to either the in-group or the out-group. In other words, although you need to pay special attention for someone outside the group, one can feel more relaxed within one's group. Therefore, underlying H4's comment, there seems to be a sense of relief that her student complied with the family's usual routine and reassured her of the student belonging to the family group.

Even though it was the first time that S7 had been to Japan, she had stayed with three different families in the Netherlands. Based on that experience, she stressed the importance of adapting oneself to new environments. She pointed out that different people do things differently, and then brought up her experience with washing as an example. With the adjectives "awkward" and "bad" being used to describe her feeling, S7 was clearly uncomfortable about her host mother doing her washing as it was not her familiar practice.

S6 and S8 also report uncomfortable experiences, but their problems are of a slightly different nature as they are more concerned with privacy. Narratives from both S6 and S8 showed they appreciated being cared for as family members. Nevertheless, the appreciation does not transfer to the idea of being so intimate that their host mothers handle their washing. S6 says the only "not-so-good thing" about the homestay experience was the awkwardness in responding to her host mother's offer to do her laundry. As she has difficulties in explaining her feelings, S6 stumbles a lot with many pauses and she repeats the word "awkward" three times:

> I always felt a little bit awkward about having to ask my host mother to get my laundry done. Like, my host mother always offered me, but then some days, just, I don't know I just found it awkward for myself.
> (Interviewer: Really? It's interesting. Someone else said a similar thing.)
> I remember that that was being one of the most awkward bits for me. But, everything else was fine, like taking a shower? As a guest, I was always offered the first shower and the first bath as well.
> (Interviewer: You just didn't feel comfortable?)
> Ah::: laundry, I don't know because, like, it's hard to explain (laugh) At home, we have a big laundry basket and I put my clothes in there. But, I felt I don't know, coming to my host mother with the arm full of my dirty clothes, it's somebody else's clothes instead of her family's? I didn't mind much that my clothes are getting washed with the rest of the family, but I wasn't sure how they would feel? I didn't want to be rude, handing over my dirty laundry to her? I don't know […] Ah:: I don't know whether I should ask? (laugh) That was the only thing for me. (S6)

As she utters “I don’t know” five times, clearly S6 is ambivalent about why it was one of the most awkward homestay aspects. When she says “it’s somebody else’s clothes, instead of her family’s,” she actually excludes herself from the host family composition, suggesting a psychological boundary. Therefore, underlying S6’s awkwardness about handing over her personal washing is her perception that the host mother is a stranger, with whom she could not share this family intimacy. Likewise, S8 shows hesitancy. She is not crystal clear about why she felt the way she did, either. The incident was brought up when the interviewer asked if she had any advice for future homestay participants:

> Don’t be shy. Don’t be shy when they offer you things. My host mother offered me to do my laundry but I was a little hesitant. You know, she said, “Please let me do it.” “Please let me do it.” I think my main problem was to try to open up to that. So, my main advice is, “Don’t be shy. Try everything.”
> (Interviewer: OK. What was the problem with washing?)
> Oh, washing? She said, “Give me ALL your washing.” I went OK, but I was a little bit uncomfortable with that.
> (Interviewer: Why was it a problem?)
> Washing, I don’t know. It is something personal, it belongs to you, your belongings. When you think about it, someone you really don’t know would go through that and wash it for you. I don’t know, just something uncomfortable. (S8)

Towards the end of the above quote, S8 refers to the host mother doing washing and states, “someone you really don’t know would go through that.” S8 clearly views her host mother as a stranger. Furthermore, she uses the term “personal” referring to her own washing, which indicates her privacy boundary. It is not possible to generalise as there are only two male students in the present project, but only female students raised laundry issues. So it may be a gender-specific issue. Both S6 and S8 are 19 year old females. Young women of that age may be more sensitive to handing over their underwear to a stranger. Therefore, crossing their privacy boundaries can be the pivotal factor driving their discomfort.

By contrast, host mothers generally assume the role of looking after all the family washing. This is well-depicted in H4’s story introduced earlier, who displays relief when her student let her handle her washing. H4’s situation indeed contrasts sharply with H2, who reports a

rather perplexed memory about her student's behaviour. H2's student reportedly brought out her washing only occasionally for H2, but never her underwear:

> そう言えば、洗濯物を全然出さなかったんですよ。それが今でも不思議で不思議で「クリーニングはここに出してね。」って説明したので、たまに上着とかズボンとかは何回か出したんですけど下着をね、全然出さなかったんですよ。私としては「え～？どうしたのかしら？どうしてんの？」って感じで、子供たちが言うには「きっとお風呂場で洗ってるんじゃない？」って言うんですけどね。それが不思議だったんです。いまだに私は不思議ですね。洋服とかはね、何回か出したんですけど、下着はいっさいなかったんですよ、ほんと。前に来たイギリスの子とかは、「こうしてネットに入れてね。」って説明したんで、下着も洋服も関係なしに一緒に出してたんですけどね、まあそれで私もそれが当たり前だと思ってたんですけどね。一応本人には、「洗濯家族と一緒にするけど構わないか」って、聞いたんですよ。それはOKって言ってたんですけどいまだに私には不思議で！（笑）まあ万が一のためにあの子の部屋にさおは置いてあったんで、それはそれでいいんですけど私もね、ひょっとしたら紙の使い捨てのとか持ってきたのかしらなんて考えたりもして（笑）ブラジャーとかパンツとか出さなかったんですよ。
>
> Come to think of it, she never brought out any washing for me to do. I still feel really mystified about that. I explained, "Please put your laundry here." So, she did put out some things like jackets and pants once in a while a few times, but no underwear at all. Not once. To me, I felt like, "What? What is the matter? What are you doing?" My kids said "Surely she isn't washing hers in the bathroom?" It was a mystery. It still remains a mystery to me. As for clothes, she brought them out a few times, but there was no underwear at all, really. The kid from England who came previously, I explained to her saying "please put them in the net in this way." She put out both underwear and clothes together so I thought it was a common practice. Just in case, I asked, "I do our family washing altogether with yours, but you do not mind?" She said it was OK, but I still feel mystified! (laugh) Well, we left a clothesline in the kid's room just in case so, it is all right if that was the case. I even thought of the idea that she may have brought paper disposable ones (laugh) You know, she did not bring out things like bras and undies. (H2)

As H2 recounts the incidents, she uses the Japanese word *fushigi* (mysterious, wonder) five times, highlighting how odd she felt. Considering the accounts provided by S6 and S8, who hesitated to give their washing to their host mothers, it is probable that the particular student was similarly uncomfortable with passing on her personal items to H2. In contrast, H2's view is that their host student is a part of the family, and that it is natural for her to do all the family washing together, and hence the particular student's behaviour is beyond her comprehension.

In summary, laundry matters can be a source of uncomfortableness/awkwardness for these young adult female students in a homestay family life. This is particularly the case with regard to their underwear being handled by their host mothers. As raised in 4.4, the concept of the student being treated as "a family member" is passed on to both host families and students. Even if both parties accept that notion, however, a gap manifests in how it is expected to function in practice, given the intimate family environment. Clearly, underlying the laundry issues is such a gap. While these host mothers mostly assume their role includes doing their student's washing, young adult female students have difficulties in crossing a family intimacy boundary.

6.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter presented findings on issues related to roles as a family member that came up during the homestay. Through the narratives from both groups, we glimpsed aspects of the unique situation that the short homestay setting offers. As described in Chapter 5, however, the particular demographic of host families is not representative of the range of Japanese families. There is no single-parent household and they are mostly single-income middle-class families with at least one family member (usually the host mother) at home and available for students in the house. Over a limited timespan, the host families and the homestay students supposedly form a family unit, which determines their respective roles as family members. Although the perception of the host role as a parental one affects the hosts' expectations of their student's behaviours, this is dependent to some extent on the ages of hosts and students, family composition and the student's gender. On the other hand, from the students' perspective, the way they are treated is a pleasant or perplexing surprise at times, in particular when they are positioned in a role they consider themselves to have grown out of in Australia. The particular context of the short-term Japanese homestay generates peculiar relational

dynamics, which do not occur for other travellers and in other intercultural settings such as business situations.

Simultaneously, some aspects echoed points discussed in chapter 4. Most notably, these students distinguish themselves from ordinary tourists, which is achieved by being treated as a family member in a Japanese household. However, it is apparent that the respective interpretations of what constitutes being a family member do not necessarily coincide. Telling host families to treat a student as a family member and telling students that they are to be treated as a family member makes it sound as though everyone shares the same expectations. On the contrary, understandings of family differ, thus the expectations are different. Such differences explain the participants' reactions, and what is in actuality experienced can be surprising for both groups.

Chapter 7. Findings and Discussion: Expectations of a post-homestay relationship

7.1 Introduction

In a similar vein as the previous Chapter 6, Chapter 7 presents the findings by framing them primarily as answers to the first and the second sub-research questions (i.e. kinds of assumptions and expectations about the homestay experience, and the effect the short-term homestay context has on the roles and relationships). In contrast with the previous chapter, the current chapter focuses on issues after the homestay. The Australian university students and their host families usually live together for only a few weeks. After the program ends, students return to Australia directly or via short trips. The host families and their students may never meet again. Regardless, the findings suggest that the relationship may continue after the departure. The discussions are divided into three sub-themes: differing ways that the students and their host families perceive the encounter with each other by highlighting a key Japanese word; expectations and actual experiences of on-going communication; and how the post-stay relationship can be adversely affected by mismatched expectations regarding interactional reciprocity.

7.2 縁 *En* (fate, karma) versus luck

An intriguing difference was noted between host families and their students in the way they commented on their encounters through the homestay opportunity. The perceptions about meeting their particular student and being hosted by their particular host family differ, as is reflected in the use of Japanese word 縁 –*en*– and English word –luck–. Host parents used a Japanese term, *en*, whereas students used a different term, luck, when referring to their meetings. According to De Mente (2011), the Japanese have two contrasting faces with one modern and rational, and the other traditional and emotional. De Mente further points out that the best way to understand the latter side of Japanese attitudes and behaviour is through their cultural code words as they reveal their psychology and philosophy in far more depth than any test (p. 13). *En* is one of these words and deserves attention as it was mentioned by four host parents. Their comments reveal that these host parents place great value on meeting their particular student. On the other hand, no special emotional attachment is expressed by the students during the interviews.

Neither host families nor exchange students choose who to host or to be hosted by as the host universities match them with each other. Accordingly, among the host parents, a perception prevails that there is something special about encountering their respective host students. The recurring word *en* reflects such perception, which literally means "fate," "destiny" or "karma." For example, H2 referred to this word in her email sent after the interview. H2 is a host mother who extensively recounted her disappointment about not having heard from her student since her departure. She thanked the researcher for listening to her story and shared her philosophy about life:

> 私が子ども達に言っていることは、「人と人との出会いを大切にするように」ということです。出会いには不思議な縁を感じませんか？こんなにたくさんいる中で、出会えることが不思議であり嬉しく思います。
>
> What I tell my children is to treasure encounters with new people. Don't you feel mysterious *en* in encounters? Of all the people possible, we meet a particular person. The encounter makes me wonder and feel happy about it. (H2)

H2's view provides partial insight into the reasons behind her disappointment. Her belief that the encounter was fate amplifies the value of maintaining social ties with her host student. While this homestay experience was the second time for H2, the other three host parents who mentioned this word had had more extensive experiences. These people all use the expression as "*en ga aru,*" which literally means "to have fate" or "fate exists," about meeting with all their past students:

> まあ、ご縁があってね、出会えて、また輪が広がってて言うんですかね。楽しいですよ。
>
> Well, we had *en*, which enabled us to meet, and the circle [of friends] expanded, that is the way I see it. It is enjoyable. (H6)

> もしかしたら縁があった2、3週間お互い刺激しあって、私も元気でいて楽しめるって言うか。
>
> Maybe we had *en* for two or three weeks. During that time, *w*e can brighten each other's lives. That keeps me well and I enjoy it. (H1/HM)

H6 has hosted many international students through the university's exchange program as well as other homestay schemes. Her comment explains her views on the benefits. The perception is echoed in the comment of H1 who is also a long-term participant. Both see their encounters as being brought about by *en* and find the whole experience enjoyable. H3 further links *en* to the possible on-going communication after the stay:

> せっかく縁があったんだし、してあげたいとは思うんですけど、無理ですよね。
> After all, we had *en* so I do want to [keep in touch], but it is impossible, isn't it? (H3)

These host parents are all in their 50s and 60s. Considering *en* is not mentioned by younger host parents, it may possibly be a concept more valued among the older generation. Thus, these values may be generationally specific rather than Japanese in general. Nevertheless, the expression captures the special sentiment attached to welcoming a particular student into their homes.

In contrast, students did not dwell on the nature of the encounters with their host families. Three students did, however, refer to being housed with their particular families as a matter of luck. Both S1 and S9 recount many happy memories with their respective host family and consider themselves lucky. S7, who also talks about her enjoyable time, explicitly links homestay experience to the matter of being lucky and unlucky:

> The family itself was really nice […] yeah, they were very nice about everything. I was lucky. (S1)

> (Interviewer: How was your homestay experience overall?)
> I feel very lucky because they were very nice people. I do not mean to compare, but we, we all the exchange students talk about homestays every morning at uni. Like, what dad did for me and mum did for me and stuff like that. I feel I had a nice host mum and dad compared with some others I heard about. (S9)

> (Interviewer: Any not-so good things? Or any downside?)

> I do not think there is any downside to it unless you have a really bad homestay family. (laugh) […] Sometimes you get lucky and sometimes you get unlucky, I guess. I know one of the girls from the group called her host mother, "mama" and father "papa" and they clicked together. They were really like real parents and she went back this year and she stayed with them. To me, my host family was great but they are not my real family. I have my fantastic own family over here. There is no way to replace that, but some people even think that. (S7)

Both S9's and S7's comments suggest comparative perceptions prevailed amongst host students. Similarly, the experienced host parents often did make comparisons about their past students' attitudes and behaviours, although they never attributed their placement to being (un)lucky. Thus, this tendency shows the fundamental differences in their perceptions.

The account of S7's peer also serves as an example of the instant relationship being sustained after the initial stay. S7 views her as simply a case of being lucky. Naturally, these relationships are two-way, thus parents and students may view the relationship created during the stay differently. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are fundamental differences in perceptions between parents and students about being matched with their respective students or families, which are reflected in the use of *en* and luck. (The Japanese term for luck is *un*, and it is never mentioned by host parents.) The former term connotes predetermining the series of events that happen to somebody. On the other hand, the latter connotes an arbitrary distribution of events that happens purely by chance. In other words, "fate" connotes the determination of a life path, thus suggesting deep connection and a long term implication for interpersonal relations. By contrast, "luck" is more associated with determining moments focusing on the present time, not necessarily looking at the future implication. Therefore, in this particular context of a short homestay encounter, "luck" matters in determining whether one has a good time during the stay.

In summary, the two groups see their homestay encounters in different ways. Some older host parents tend to attach sentimental feelings to the chance meeting with their host student as something unique and special that is worth preserving. This partly explains their willing and caring attitudes in looking after their host students during their stay. On the other hand, students see it as purely luck. These differing cultural values plausibly influence both groups' perceptions on the post-stay communication.

7.3 On-going communication

On-going communication was prominently mentioned by all the experienced host parents, yet only one student brought up this topic. This suggests host families are more sensitive about communication after homestay than students. Indeed, the following excerpt that appears in one of the homestay handbooks (university A) for host family highlights the post-homestay relationship:

> 留学生は、日本での生活や、ホストファミリーの皆様のことを、生涯忘れることはありません。日本にできたもう一つの家族との出会いとその貴重な体験によって、日本が彼（女）らにとっての第二の故郷になるのです。帰国後も留学生と交流を続けているご家庭も、数多くあります。
>
> Exchange students will never forget about their life in Japan and host families for the rest of their life. Through meeting with another family gained in Japan and the valuable experience, Japan becomes their second hometown. There are many families that continue to be in touch with exchange students after they return home.

This paragraph would raise host families' expectations about their relationship following the homestay. The situation that the last sentence portrays is familiar to some of the interviewed families, although this idealised condition does not always occur. H1, H3 and H6 have all hosted at least 10 students, and they have had different experiences depending on the student. They do not necessarily stay in touch, but even if the association does not continue, their fond memories seem to remain. H6 particularly gave a strong impression that she has thoroughly enjoyed her long hosting experience. She seems to cherish the special rapport that she has established with most of her students. Several enlarged photos of herself, her husband and her students in sightseeing spots were displayed on the wall around the dining table where the interview was held. When responding to a question on good things about doing homestay, she talks about the fun encounters and her great joy at being in touch with other cultures and associating with host sons, then points to the photos:

ほらこの写真とか。オーストラリアに旅行した時のものなんですけどね。案内してくれた息子達なんです。ホームステイの度に、息子が増えていく感じですかね。世界中にたくさん息子達ができてね、楽しませてもらっているんですよ。

See these photos. These were taken when we travelled to Australia. These are our sons who showed us around. It is as though [the number of] sons increases every time we do homestay. It allows me to enjoy having acquired many sons all over the world. (H6)

In a similar vein to H6, H1 and H3 have maintained on-going communication with some of their past students through emails, postcards, phone calls and/or visits. H1's family has many albums, which contain photos as well as mementoes such as used museum tickets, postcards and thank you notes from students. They showed the researcher a few albums as they shared their memories over a decade. Then a story was brought up about their first Australian student, from whom they had just received a wedding invitation. The student had revisited their home twice since his initial homestay. Clearly, this treasured on-going relationship was sustained long after the initial stay. When asked if they consider that kind of "relationship" or "connection" as one of the good aspects in offering homestays, however, the host mother firmly denies that it is their expectation:

いえいえ、それはね、私は全然期待していないんですよ。彼らの中には帰った後も連絡くれる子もいるし、もう全然音沙汰ない子もいますしね。だからつながり？を求めたいとかそういうんじゃなくてね、もしかしたら縁があった2、3週間お互い刺激しあって、私も元気でいて楽しめるって言うか、なかなか他に刺激とかってないじゃないですか。若い人と一緒に生活してるっていうのは刺激になりますよね。その結果として、あちらがまた連絡取りたいって思ってコンタクトくれればそれはそれでこちらも取るけれども、連絡なくても「どうしてるの？ここのところ連絡ないけど。」なんて、こちらから追いかけてまでつながるようなことはしないし。

No, no. Actually, I am not expecting that at all. Some get in touch with us and some have had no contact at all. So, it is not that we seek that kind of connection? Maybe we had *en* for two or three weeks. During the time, we can brighten each other's lives. I can also stay well and enjoy it. There is hardly any other stimulation, is there? It is stimulating when you live together with young people. Well, as a result, if they want

to contact us again, we will, too. Even if they do not, we do not chase after them asking "what are you up to? We have not heard from you recently," and so on. (H1/HM)

After her husband nods indicating his agreement with her view, he adds a comment:

まあ、シンガポールの子でさ、よく旅行先から葉書とかくれる子がいるんだけど、我々はみんなにそれを期待しているわけじゃなくて、でも、もちろん、それはそれで嬉しいんだけどね。

Well, there is this Singaporean kid who often sends us postcards when she travels, but it is not that we expect that from everyone. But, of course, you know we are happy with that. (H1/HF)

This comment sums up their realistic outlook about post-homestay communication. Their main focus was to maximise their encounter during the short time together brought about by *en*. While they enjoy the on-going communication, they neither expect nor actively pursue it. This kind of way of thinking is echoed by H3:

もうかなり数こなしてきて、思うのは、やっぱり、なんて言うのかその後、あまり望まないほうがしんどくないのかなと。その時その時一生懸命お世話してるつもりなんですけど、その後手紙書いたりして皆とつなげていこうと思うとしんどいですね。毎年クリスマスカードとか年賀状とか書いてくれたりとか、たまに電話くれて「また行くから。」っていう子もいますけど。来年行くねって、それが2年後になったりしたこともあります。こっちも最初はそうしてあげようと思って、でもしんどくなって、せっかく縁があったんだし、してあげたいとは思うんですけど、無理ですよね。まあ、1，2回やりとりして、その後は縁があれば会えるだろうし。だから、後をつなげていこうとあんまりしなくてもいいのかなという心構えですね、最近は。今回の子は、オーストラリアに帰った時に、一度ね、電話くれたんですけど。無事に帰ってきました。ありがとうってね。まあ、嬉しいですよね。

I have now hosted quite a number of people. What I think, after all, how can I put it, I wonder whether, if you do not desire too much afterwards, it is less tiring. I believe that I do my best to look after these people each time and every time. But, it is tiring if

> I try to stay in touch with everyone afterwards. Some people write Christmas cards and New Year cards every year for me and even give me a call and say, "I will come again." Someone said that she would come next year and it turned out to be two years later. First I was going to try to do the same but it became tiring. After all, we had *en* so I do want to [keep in touch], but it is impossible, isn't it? Well, we contact each other once or twice, and then we can meet again if there is *en* later. So recently I came to have a frame of mind that says we don't have to maintain a connection. As for the latest kid, she gave me a call once when she went back to Australia. She said, "I returned safely. Thank you." You know I was happy with that. (H3)

Both H1 and H3 adopted relaxed attitudes in which they try not to expect ongoing contact with their host students. They are fundamentally willing to go with the flow. These attitudes may be a factor that has enabled them to enjoy hosting exchange students over such an extensive time period. Whether they expect it or not, the post-stay contact is still appreciated.

By contrast, among students, there is very little mention of contact after homestay. Only S9, who talked about what a close relationship she formed with her host parents, mentioned their potential future reunion:

> She went to Japan from a high school in Australia. My host mum actually put me on the phone to talk to her. They said the girl and I are like their daughters. So we were talking about the family gathering kind of things in Australia and then go back to Japan. (S9)

Her host family had many homestay students before S9 including a high school exchange student. Her comment illustrates the way that the host family formation can even extend to their previous host students. S9 and her host family had no immediate concrete plans for what they call "the family gathering." Nonetheless, what is noteworthy is their view that the end of the stay does not mean the end of their relationship.

In summary, despite the short time span for the actual stay, there is an implication that the relationship may be sustainable into the future. However, the expectations are mismatched between the host parents and the students. While it may not be explicitly expected, it is a

prominent characteristic from the host parents' perspective. Another characteristic is their expectation about the reciprocal nature of the relationship as will be discussed in 7.4.

7.4 Reciprocity in the relationship

While the host families shared their mostly pleasant hosting experiences, some unpleasant memories were also brought up. Two kinds of situation underscore how the lack of reciprocity can impact on the post-homestay relationship. In one situation, it was about a student's attitude and behaviour during the stay, and the other was about post-stay correspondence.

H6, who has enjoyed gaining honorary sons over a decade, has one bitter memory. She recounts an exceptionally unpleasant experience with one student:

> 数年前に受け入れた子は、実は日本に1年間留学して8月に帰っていてまた11月にこの短期に参加してうちにホームステイしたんですが、何も興味を示さなかったんで困りましたね。[…]よくよく聞いていたらどうも彼女が出来てその彼女に会いに来たみたいでうちはホテル代わりかと思っていやな気持ちになりました。ほんと、いい気持ちはしませんでしたね。ええと4年か5年前かしらね。ボランティアの学生さんが、「K は私達と付き合う暇があったら彼女と会うって言ったんです。」って私に言って、私もね、まあなんてひどい事言うのかしらと思って、一言言ってやろうかと思ったんですが、まあもう帰るし、私もまあ私の心に納めておこうかとぐっと我慢したんです。ボランティアの学生さんにも失礼ですよね。色々世話してもらってるのに。[…]いつも私は学生さん達にさようならと言う時、「また日本に来る時があったら連絡してね。遊びに来てね。」って言うんですが、さすがにあの子に対してはその言葉は出てきませんでしたね。
>
> It is about the kid that I hosted several years ago. He actually came to Japan on a one-year exchange, went back to Australia in August and then participated in this program in November. He stayed in our house, but he showed no interest in anything. We got distressed about that. […] Eventually, we found out that he had a girlfriend and he came to Japan to see her. I felt that our house was used just for accommodation and it gave me an unpleasant feeling. Really, it didn't give me good feelings. Well, I guess it

> is about four or five years ago. A volunteer student told me, "K said that if he had time to go out with us, he would rather see his girlfriend." I thought what a terrible thing to say and I was thinking of having a word with him. But, as he was leaving soon, I decided to swallow the words and tolerated it. It is rude to the volunteer students, too, isn't it? Despite all the care they gave him. […] When I say goodbye to students, I always say "Please contact us when you come to Japan again. Please come to see us." But I was not able to say those words to that kid. (H6)

As people interact with each other, they make dynamic judgments as to whether their rapport has been enhanced, maintained or damaged (Spencer-Oatey, 2005, p. 96). This case clearly demonstrates a damaged rapport. It simultaneously underscores the significance placed on reciprocity in interactions between the family and the student. The homestay offers much more than accommodation as the host family goes out of their way trying to care for their student as a temporary family member. Therefore, when a host student fails to respond to this hospitality with appropriate attitudes and behaviours, it builds tensions for the host family. Nevertheless, perhaps due to the shortness of the stay or to the wish to avoid conflict, people opt to put up with rather than attempt to fix the problems, just as in this case. Naturally, this hinders future communication, with the end of the stay terminating the relationship.

By contrast, interactions during homestay posed no problem in the other situation experienced by a host family. Rather what generated problems is a (non)interaction after the stay. Section 7.4.1 turns to two situations with regard to thank you notes which serve as examples of how such (non)interaction can affect the relationship following the stay.

7.4.1 Interpreting thank you notes as post-stay correspondence

Thank you notes are not a specifically Japanese custom. They are, to varying extents, practiced both in Australia and Japan. Etiquette in both cultures requires appropriate thanks for favours received though it may occur in various forms (oral, written, gift etc.). Thank you notes were never mentioned by the students interviewed. By contrast, incidents concerning a thank you note were raised by two host parents, which contrast strikingly. In one case, it greatly helped to enhance their rapport with a host student. In the other case, however, not receiving one immensely damaged their rapport. This was despite the fact that the actual

homestays were similarly enjoyable experiences for both families. These incidents enable us to glimpse differing values placed on post-stay correspondence and their affective impact.

The account of thank you notes enhancing the relationship comes from H4. On the whole, H4 sounds extremely happy about her latest homestay experience. Aside from a little puzzlement when the student stated a strongly anti-Japan opinion against whaling, H4 seems to cherish many fond memories. She provides the following response when asked if there is any particular impression about the student:

> そうですね。今回特にいい子が来てくれて、仲良くなれたというか、うちの子になってもいいよっていえるぐらいよかったので、別れるのが惜しかったですね。本当に家族に馴染んでくれてお互い自然体でやれてやりやすくて居心地がいいホームステイ体験だったので、またぜひやりたいですね。
>
> Let me see. We had a particularly good kid on this occasion. We got close. It was good enough to make me feel like she could be my child. It was sad to say goodbye. Really, she fitted in with the family well. We were both able to be our natural selves. It was easy to manage and a comfortable homestay experience so I want to try it again. (H4)

Her second line, "good enough to make me feel like she could be my child," reinforces the idea of seeking a particular relationship through family-ship. As mentioned in 6.2, H4's 16-year-old daughter was in the United States on a high school exchange at the time of the homestay and the interview. Therefore, although the Australian student was slightly older than H4's daughter, H4 was perhaps able to see her student as a surrogate to some extent. H4 showed the researcher several photos she took with her student, including those taken at a home party with family friends. Then, H4 reaches for a paper holder on the table to share her excitement at receiving a thank you note from the student:

> お礼状を頂いたんですけど、[実物を渡してくれながら] ほら、こんな巻物みたいな縦書きの便箋と封筒。日本で買って帰ったんでしょうかね？すごいでしょう？感動しちゃいましたね。すごく嬉しかったです。思わず友達とかに見せにもって行きました。

I received this thank you card. [while passing the letter to show the interviewee] You see, this kind of scroll type of paper and envelope with vertical writing. I wonder if she bought this in Japan. Isn't this amazing? It moved me. I was very delighted. I could not help showing this to my friends. (H4)

H4 handed it over to the researcher, signalling to read it. The letter was hand-written in Japanese. It contains many errors with the grammar and Japanese script, but conveys the student's sincere appreciation. The letter lists particular activities with the family and expresses gratitude for each one. The fact that she showed it to her friends as well as the interviewer indicates her excitement. This situation highlights the significant role that the post-stay communication has played in reaffirming and enhancing the close relationship developed during the homestay period.

H2, on the other hand, is enormously disappointed about not having heard from her student in the one and a half months since she left. When asked about anything she found surprising or unexpected in communication with the student, H2 quickly brings up the incident and spends substantial time in telling the story:

前にイギリスの子が来た時も今回の子も時期的なタイミングは似ていて、ちょうど帰った時がクリスマスと新年のちょっと前っていうタイミングだったんですね。イギリスの子は帰る途中にオーストラリアを経由して行ったんで、そこから葉書送ってきて、イギリスの家に帰り着いたら、「無事帰りました。ありがとう。お世話になりました。」って、カードか葉書送ってくれたんですね。ご両親もクリスマスカード下さったりしたんですけどね、この Ｂ の場合は、帰ってからもうんともすんとも言ってこないもんですからね、なんかお母さんが手術するって話をしてたから、家族で「お母さんが悪いんじゃないか」って色々考えたんですよ。私が働いてるものですから、前に住んでるおばあちゃん、主人の母なんですけど、彼女も色々世話してくれてたので、聞くんですよ。「Ｂ から何か連絡あった？葉書とか来た？」って。で、「来ないよ。」っていうと「あらまあ、前のイギリスの子は葉書とか送ってきたのにねえ？おかしいねえ。」って。日本人ですからね。そういうこと気にするじゃないですか。礼儀って言うか。で、息子も様子伺いにメールしてみたらしいんですけど、その返事も来ないんですね。主人も仕事で忙しかったんですけど、結構時間を割いてまあ自分たちが好きでした

ことだからいいんですけど、週末観光に連れて行ったりとか、アイスクリームが好きでハーゲンダッツ食べたことがないっていうからわざわざ買ってきてあげたりとかまあ世話したんですけどね、何も言ってこないから、主人も「そんな子に見えなかったけどね。」って、言って。結構可愛がったつもりだったんですけど、葉書一本よこさないって言うのは、正直失望したというか、がっかりしたなと思ってます。

Both the time when we had the British student and the last student were similar. It was just before Christmas and New Year's Day when they returned to their homes. The British girl took a route via Australia so she sent us a postcard from there. When she arrived home in England, she sent a postcard or a card for us saying "I got home all right. Thank you for taking care of me." Her parents also sent us a Christmas card. In the case of B, we have not heard anything at all. She was telling us that her mum was going to have an operation so our family was thinking about the possibility that her mother has been unwell or something. I work, so a grandmother, who lives across the road from us, my husband's mother, looked after her as well. So, she asks me, "Have you heard from B? Has a postcard or something come?" When we say, "Nothing has come," she says, "Dear, dear, the previous British girl sent us a postcard. How strange." You know we Japanese care about these things, don't we? We call it manners. So, my son sent her an email to check how things are, but she has not replied to the email, either. My husband was also involved in taking time off when he was busy with work. Well, it is OK, we did that because we wanted to and liked to do those things for her, but we did things like taking her for sightseeing on the weekend and bringing home Häagen Dazs ice cream for her as she said she liked ice cream and she had never tried that brand. Well, we looked after her, but we have not heard from her so my husband also says "she did not seem to be that kind of girl." We thought we treated her fairly well with affection[19] so to be honest, I feel disappointed or let down that she has not even sent us one postcard. (H2)

H2 gets quite emotional as she tells the above story with her voice trembling and her face frowning. Up until then, she smiled as she recalled some funny episodes. She explains the involvement of other family members (son, host father, host father's mother) in looking after

[19] The Japanese verb used here is "*kawaigaru*." Various English translations can be found in dictionaries for this word including "love," "adore," "treat a person with affection" and "to be affectionate." An important aspect of this expression is that it is always used to describe the special feeling and behaviour of a person towards someone junior.

their student. Hence, all the family members are left with a distressing, puzzled feeling about the non-correspondence. Clearly, H2 tries hard to justify the reason why her student has not sent a single postcard, let alone a thank you card. They cannot help comparing this latest student's behaviour with the totally different behaviour exhibited by their previous British student. According to Spencer-Oatey, it is not behaviour per se that is polite or impolite. It is the evaluative label that people attach to behaviour as a result of their subjective judgements about the social appropriateness of verbal and non-verbal behaviour (2005, p. 97). Taking this perspective, the student's behaviour has been subjectively judged by H2's family, attaching an evaluative label of impoliteness.

H2 also implies reciprocity as the principle behind her expectation. H2 states towards the end of the above quote, "it is OK, we did that because we wanted to and liked to do those things for her." Consciously or unconsciously, she suggests that she is not expecting any kind of return from the student. However, simultaneously, she lists various things done for their student such as taking her for sightseeing and going out of their way in bringing home expensive ice cream. On one hand, she says all her actions were voluntary, while she manifests her expectation of post-stay correspondence on the other. Hence, there is a tension in her feelings.

In order to analyse H2's viewpoint further, the notion of *on* is useful. Dictionaries define the meaning as "favour," "benefit," "obligation" and "a debt of gratitude" among other alternatives. Lebra (1976) describes *on* as a culture-bound notion of reciprocity, claiming that it "constitutes a basis for Japanese morality" (p. 92). Lebra further states that an *on* must be accepted with gratitude since it is an evidence of the giver's benevolence or generosity. She argues that an *on* relationship, once generated by giving and receiving a benefit, compels the receiver-debtor to repay *on* in order to restore balance (p. 91). According to Ohashi (2008) who investigates the Japanese formal thanking ritual, "*o-rei,"* the Japanese aim to achieve a symbolic settlement of debt-credit equilibrium by thanking each other. Even though his study focuses on linguistic aspects, the concept of reciprocity through which those concerned try to balance out their debt is also applicable to non-linguistic behaviours. Taking this notion into consideration, the debt-credit imbalance is due to the student not having repaid *on* she received from the host family who cared for her.[20]

[20] See Wierzbicka (1997, pp. 254-262) for more discussions on the notion of *on*.

Aside from the cultural perspective, what is also possible as an explanation is the issue being one of inter-generational communication. Between these two demographic groups – middle-class middle-aged host parents and young Australian students – there is likely to be a generational gap. These young Australians, who have grown up with and are used to communicating through texting, face-booking and tweeting, may simply neither practice nor appreciate written thank you notes. On the other hand, for older generations, whether Australians or Japanese, a written thank you note is considered appropriate in this circumstance. As expressing thankfulness may occur in different forms, H2's particular student may have thought that her Australian souvenirs and verbal expressions of thanks on departure were sufficient. Amongst participants in the present study, only H2 raises such an incident as a negative experience, hence this may be an isolated incident. However, the fact that "receiving no thank you notes" is listed among "frequently asked questions" in a handbook for host families by university A suggests otherwise. It lists a question, "There has been not one thank you letter after the student returned home. What is going on?" The answer explains, "Many students believe that communicating a feeling of thank you at the departure is sufficient. Please understand it as a difference in customs. You should not expect more appreciation than that." This situation mirrors H2's experience precisely, highlighting the critical gap between the expectations of host families and host students about conveying appreciation.

The following additional comment from H2 further emphasises her expectations of reciprocal communication:

> まあうちの息子がオーストラリアにいくよって、友達がいるからそこにも行くよって、話していて、日本人の感覚だと「是非、来て。」とか、「どこそこがいいよ。」とかそいうのがあるじゃないですか。でもそんな反応が来なかったんで、私はね、「あ、ひょっとして来たら迷惑なんかな」というのが頭をよぎったんですよ。息子には、「お母さんが思うほど外国の人はそういうのあまり気にしないんで、期待せん方がいいよ。」って、釘はさされているんですけどまあ、異文化かな？と。
>
> Well, we were saying that my son was going to Australia. We said he was going there, too, as he had a friend there. A Japanese person would usually say things like "Please come." Or "Such and such is a good place." But, actually she did not respond that way at all. So, it dawned on me, that maybe if he comes, it is troublesome. My son did

warn me, “Foreigners do not care about things like that as much as you think, mother. You should not expect too much.” So, I guess it is a different culture? (H2)

In essence, H2 seems to expect some reciprocity in hospitality even if it is just lip service. At the same time, she believes that behaving in a particular reciprocal way is a Japanese characteristic. Therefore, she attempts to attribute the student’s non-reciprocal behaviour to her different cultural background. Despite the effort H2 makes in finding reasons for the student’s behaviour, it is apparent she cannot overcome her disappointment emotionally. H2 brings up the topic again at the end of the interview when asked if there is anything that she would like to add:

やっぱりね。私達としては、お礼というより、挨拶というか、メールとか何も来なかったというのが、すごくショックというか、がっかりしたのが一番大きなあれですよね。まあ、それを除けば、あの子自体はいい子だと思うんですよ。そういう事がなければ、主人なんかもね、またホームステイの機会があれば、いやとは言わないと思うんですけどね。うちもね、子供がオーストラリアに行って、お世話になっていますしね、それはお互い様だし。そう思うんですが、うちのおばあちゃんにしてもね、何も連絡が来ないというのは、すごくがっかりしたみたいな感じなんですよ。オーストラリアにクリスマス前に帰ったんですけどね、クリスマスとお正月に家族で旅行するって言ってたんですけど。ううんまあね、これも母親としての考え方の違いなんでしょうけど、、母親として私は息子がお世話になったら、自分も「ありがとう」って、葉書１枚ぐらい送らなくちゃと思うんですが、そこら辺はあちらの家族の考え方が違うんでしょうかね？

As you expect, for us, the biggest thing was the great shock or disappointment of receiving nothing like a greeting or an email, rather than “thankfulness.” Well, apart from that, that kid herself was a nice kid, I think. If there was nothing like that, even my husband would not say no if another homestay opportunity comes along. Our son is now also in Australia and he is looked after over there so I guess it is mutual. I think that way, but still even our grandmother [her husband’s mother] seems greatly disappointed that she has not contacted us at all. She went back to Australia before Christmas. She was saying that her family would travel during Christmas and New Year. Umm, Well, there must be a difference in the way of thinking as a mother. As a

> mother, if my son is looked after, I feel I myself must send at least a postcard saying "thank you," but I wonder if the way the family over there think is different? (H2)

This comment further addresses the significance placed on the notion of reciprocity in exchanging favours. She actually uses the Japanese term "*otagaisama,*" literally meaning "mutual," referring to the facts that the student was looked after in Japan and their son is looked after in Australia. Furthermore, she refers to the student's mother and family as well as Australian culture. In her mind, she is responsible for writing a thank you note for her own son who is in his mid-20s and wonders if the student's Australian parents do not assume a similar role for their child. In other words, H2 expects to hear from the students' parents, imagining the parents to be still responsible for their own child, rather than a student being responsible for their own life. Accordingly, H2 views the obligation relating to the mutual debt-credit reciprocal cycle as going beyond the individual level to the family unit and more broadly, the country. Simultaneously, she emphasises that it is not lack of "thankfulness" but "receiving no contact" that caused the disappointment. This reflection clearly shows that she places a strong value on maintaining the social ties established during the homestay.

In summary, the concept of reciprocity can partially account for the two situations recounted by host parents as unpleasant experiences. One referred to a student's non-reciprocal attitude and behaviour during the stay, whereas the other was about receiving no timely post-stay correspondence. What is common between both situations is the implicit need for reciprocity in the relationship.

7.5 Chapter conclusion

The short homestay can develop into a long-term association if host students and their families foster the relationship. What the data has shown is that the long-term future of this particular relationship is envisaged in different ways. From the young Australians' viewpoint, after a few weeks, the homestay concludes and there is not necessarily an idea that this is going to be a long-term commitment. On the other hand, the value of ongoing communication is more often embraced by host families in forms such as thank you notes, postcards, phone calls, or reuniting in Japan or elsewhere.

Host parents greatly cherish post-stay correspondence, sometimes in a sentimental way, even if they do not explicitly expect it. The homestay publication for host families certainly included paragraphs about families that continue to be in touch with their exchange students, thus contributing to high hopes among host families for post-stay communication. On the other hand, it is curious that this kind of information does not appear in the publication for students. As described in 4.4.1, the homestay handbooks for students mainly list what to do and not do during the stay. According to the coordinators of the short exchange programs, however, students are advised to write thank you notes. What the study found is that, even if students are told to write a thank you note, they may not necessarily understand the underlying value. From some host families' perspectives, there may be a long-term emotional investment in continuing to volunteer as a homestay family. Therefore, post-stay correspondence, thank you notes in particular, can reaffirm or damage the rapport developed during the homestay.

Simultaneously, it is important to note the individual differences as some host parents never raised the topic and some seem to have displayed relatively more relaxed attitudes compared with others about communication after the homestay. The host parents with extensive experience such as H1, H3 and H6 are not greatly concerned about whether or not on-going communication takes place although they still treasure it. Among the host parents interviewed in the present study, H2 is the only participant who explicitly shared her negative feelings about not receiving post-stay communication. Her expectation may have been higher than other participants, but nonetheless, her personal account enabled us to highlight how one can emotionally suffer when such an expectation is not fulfilled.

The preceding chapter focused on issues arising during the stay while the issues examined in this chapter are those that arise post-homestay. The commonality is that both are associated with the peculiar relationship generated by the instant family formation. Once one becomes a family member, the connection is hard to break, hence expectations towards on-going communications are more likely to develop in homestay contexts compared with other intercultural encounters. Although it may be invisible, the dynamic of the instant family is a characteristic of homestay, even though the initial stay is only a few weeks.

Chapter 8. Findings and Discussion: Expectations of teaching and learning as an international exchange

8.1 Introduction

Chapters 6 and 7 were framed as answers to the combination of the first and the second sub-questions. By contrast, Chapter 8 is framed primarily as answers to the third sub-question on how the context of homestay as an international exchange shapes expectations and experiences in relation to teaching and learning. The data shows that, although the host family and the host student play family roles, they each simultaneously take on other sometimes conflicting roles. Chapter 8 discusses three sub-themes that emerged and can be linked to the context of homestay as an international exchange: the host family's role as teachers of language and culture, their role as tour guides, and perceptions related to experiencing different cultures and identifying Japaneseness.

8.2 Host families' roles as language and culture teachers

Both Japanese universities describe their programs as a Japanese language and culture learning program, through which students can enhance both their language skills and cultural understanding. In order to support this goal, the host families are asked in the respective handbooks to speak to their students in Japanese and to adhere to their usual lifestyle without altering it for their host students. The rationale for the latter is that it allows for experiential learning opportunities so that the students come to understand everyday Japanese culture and customs. Indeed, all the host families reported that they conscientiously spoke Japanese with their students. Additionally, many accounts from both groups clearly show that host families took on active tutoring roles. Accordingly, all the students viewed their homestay experience as beneficial for language and culture learning, which reinforces the aspect often described as an advantage of homestay in previous studies (see 2.3.2). What the data in the present study has shown, which did not emerge in other studies reviewed, is that the intensity of the experience was beyond the expectation of beginning level students.

While some previous studies contend that homestay with local families offers an ideal environment for improving language skills for students, some suggest otherwise. Reportedly, there are situations where host families are not available to help them to practice the target language (e.g., Campbell, 2004; Wilkinson, 1998), and/or host families feel frustrated by

their students constantly expecting them to be available to help them with their language (e.g., Richardson, 2003). Such experiences were never raised by the participants in the present study. All the students indicate both in journal entries and the interviews how beneficial their homestay experience was in improving their Japanese. Particularly noteworthy is the considerable role that this group of host families played in language tutoring their students. The following representative excerpts underscore the students' positive perspectives on language learning experienced during the homestay:

> My homestay experience? I think it was very beneficial in terms of language because I felt that I learnt a lot more language there than anywhere else. I was able to practice it? in an environment that, ah, allowed me to make mistakes and not feel BAD? (laugh) about making mistakes. Ah, my host mum actually kept a journal for me. Every time, she bought me this little booklet. And every time, we took it everywhere with me and we wrote down new words, ah, and we wrote down sentences, she helped me with that. (S7)

> He [host father] also likes to test me. Every day at dinner when we are eating, he tested me. Like, "What is this in Japanese?" "How do you say it in Japanese?" (laugh) Like, asking what the name? like, *Hashi*? Chopsticks? Table? Whatever. (S9)

These two quotations show the considerable efforts that the host parents made to help their students' language learning. Both S7's host mother, who helped her keep a log book, and S9's host father, who overtly examined her Japanese knowledge, played highly active tutoring roles. Although approaches may differ, it is salient that host families are conscious about speaking Japanese to students as illustrated in the following comments:

> 出来るだけ日本語で話すようにしていたので言葉がうまく通じなかった時は、絵を描いたりとか。あと漢字が得意だったので、漢字を書いたりとかして。それでお互いなんとなく分かり合えましたね。
>
> We were making an effort to speak in Japanese as much as possible, so when we could not make ourselves understood by words, we did things like drawing a picture. She was also good at *kanji* [Chinese characters] so we wrote *kanji*, too. Then we understood the gist with each other. (H3)

うちに来た学生さんは、あんまり、まだ喋られない子だったんですね。大学から日本語で話してください言われていたのでそう努めるようにしたんですがううん、本当にわかんないみたいで可哀想になって。

The student who came to our house could not speak that much yet. The university requested that we speak in Japanese so I tried to do so, but umm, she did not really seem to understand so I felt sorry for her. (H7)

These excerpts suggest that although students' proficiency levels vary, the host families strive to communicate in Japanese. In addition, H8's comment further highlights how host families modify their Japanese:

日本語で喋っていて、「はい、はい、分かりました。」って言ってて、ふた開けると、実は分かってなかったいう事があったり（笑）[…] やっぱり、分からない時は分からないときちんと言うように指導するべきでしょう。[…] うちは家内も僕も英語は出来ませんけど、やさしい日本語で言いなおしてあげたりは出来るし、「大丈夫」ですませてはだめです。

When we were talking in Japanese, she said, "Yes, yes, I understand," but it turned out that she did not understand (laugh) […] after all, you should instruct them to make sure to say that they do not understand when they do not understand. […] Neither my wife nor I can speak English, but I can rephrase it in simpler Japanese, so it is no good if they get away with saying "It is all right." (H8)

H8 explicitly refers to his willingness to modify his Japanese without resorting to English use for the students to comprehend. This conscientious effort widens their roles. These families, in addition to the carer and parental roles, take on active tutoring roles as well. These multiple roles that the host families assume indicate the breadth of work taken during the homestay. This intensity leaves no breaks, which creates difficulties from the student's perspective. In fact, the intensity of the actual experience was unexpected by some students. This is particularly the situation that faced the beginners. Both S1 and S4 had studied Japanese for only a year at university as total beginners prior to the homestay. While they enjoyed the overall experience, they found it extremely hard at the same time. Their problems with

constant communication in Japanese are clearly illustrated in the following comments, in which S1 utters "hard" four times while S4 uses the word three times:

> (I: How did you find your homestay experience overall?)
> It was interesting and very enjoyable, but it was DEFINITELY HARD to, like, communicate. Because only one of the daughters knew English, but she did not know that much? Like, *otōsan* [father], *okāsan* [mother], yeah, QUITE HARD. I think if I had done it next year, it would not have been as hard as that obviously, but being a first year student, I could not speak that much. I had a hard time to communicate. (S1)

> Ah, DEFINITELY challenging. Because you know you are at Uni all day doing lots. Then, you cannot just come home and relax as you must think hard to speak in a different language? To me, that was HARD as I am NOT good at Japanese. Thinking and being tired and wanting to relax made things hard. (S4)

Both stayed in essentially Japanese-only households. Hence, elsewhere both explained how frequently their dictionaries were used to bridge the language problems. S4 emphasised her fatigue with being unable to relax. This comment highlights a curiously contradictory position S4 found herself in. She was supposedly in the house to experience everyday Japanese life as a family member, and at home, one would normally want to just relax after a busy day. Yet she could not.

Other families have members who can speak various levels of English (see Chapter 5 for participants' profiles). The varying English proficiency among host families possibly influences their teaching approach. Regardless of language skills, what consistently emerge among all the host families are their conscientious tutoring efforts. S3, S6 and S8 are students who happen to be in an English-accessible environment during the homestay:

> I spoke Japanese most of the time. But, my host mother was able to speak English. So sometimes when I couldn't explain myself in Japanese, I could tell her in English. Then, she tells me how I say that in Japanese. (S3)

> I was really lucky because the youngest son actually speaks English quite well. So when I do not understand something, he could explain it to me. They still spoke to me

> in Japanese, but when I did not understand, rather than just shrugging it off and leaving me without knowing what it was, he explained to me. So, it was really good. (S6)

> They also tried to engage me, like, as I said in my diary, *otōsan* [father] tried to keep speaking English to me, but *okāsan* [mother] was going, "Stop, stop English! Speak Japanese!" So it was really good. […] It was actually good that *okāsan* was fluent in English because whenever I said something weird, they were able to correct me. (S8)

When a family member can speak English, it can create circumstances that do not force the learners to speak in Japanese. As shown above, however, among these participants, English speakers are viewed as helpful rather than as obstructing their Japanese practice. Importantly, all the host families diligently took on the language teaching role. In essence, the findings related to Japanese language practice in the present project echo the advantageous aspect of homestay as an avenue for language learning found in previous studies (Allen, Dristas & Mills, 2007; Hashimoto, 1993; Makino, 1996; McMeekin, 2006; Shikaura, 2007).

In a similar vein, the students acknowledge culture learning as another major advantage of homestay. The students' perceptions are salient that they benefit from experiencing and learning everyday Japanese culture in the homestay. When asked about good homestay things, six students nominated this aspect. S2's response is a typical one:

> Good things? Ah, It was interesting to experience the kind of, like, family life culture in the family in Japan? […] it was interesting to just be a part of the normal life and understand what it is like. Everyday culture, life as a family. (S2)

S2 observes that he understood the culture by going through what he saw as "a normal Japanese family life." As will be discussed in 8.3 and 8.4, however, what students describe as normal everyday culture may be a specially tailored version as the result of the host families' efforts of trying to show everyday Japanese life. Nevertheless, other students also made similar comments about learning everyday culture through day-to-day experiences as a benefit they enjoyed:

> Ah, I think homestay is also really good for culture? Because, when you go to Uni, you learn about language and the theory, but you don't learn a lot about culture, you know, from an average normal person's perspective? It was good for me to experience and learn everyday culture. […] homestay is a great way to learn culture, you know, it was like a reality show, except that it was reality! It wasn't a fake. It's just it is easy to learn the basics. (S7)

> Learning everyday culture was interesting. Little daily things were all different like, taking off shoes at the door everyday when I come back, food, um, TV, bath, all those little things were really interesting […] good things would be that you get to experience a daily life in a different country. I mean in Japan. […] you get to experience the little daily things, very important and you get a better understanding of the culture. (S5)

All these comments illustrate how students value being immersed in Japanese family life to learn the culture and customs, but it is noted that what is meant by "culture" is rather limited. Aspects of Japanese life frequently mentioned across the interviews and journal entries are typically about food, table manners, bathing, shoes and what they do on a day-to-day basis.

The topic of Japanese culture, on the other hand, was brought up as rather surprising episodes among host families. In fact, host families were surprised when students knew basic daily customs. This suggests that they seemed to have very little expectation of the students being knowledgeable about Japanese culture and customs. This perception is often conveyed by their complimentary comments:

> 全体的な印象として、よく勉強されていましたね。日本の生活習慣とか基本的なことは知っていて特に説明しなくてもよかったですし。
> As an overall impression, she did study well in advance. She knew basic things like Japanese daily customs and I didn't have to explain particularly about them. (H9)

> お風呂の入り方とかは皆知っていますしね、教えられていますけど[…]うちに来た子達が皆優等生だったのかもしれないけど（笑）

They all know things like how to use a bathroom because they were all taught how to […] We might have only good students. (laugh) (H1/HM)

These views were echoed in the responses given by hosts when asked if there was anything such as a Japanese custom that a student did not know:

ううん、別にないですね。皆さん日本の事をよく勉強して知っていたので、別にうちの中で生活していく分には突拍子な事もなく問題はなかったですね。家では靴を脱ぐとかお風呂の入り方とか学校で習ってきますしね。

Umm, nothing in particular. Everyone studied well and knew about Japanese things well so there was no outrageous incident or problem as far as doing day-to-day things at home is concerned. They learnt things at school like removing shoes at home and how to take a bath. (H6)

そうですね。あんまりあの子がよく勉強していたのか、特になかったですね。なかったことにびっくりしたというか。（笑）

Let me see. Not much perhaps she studied well, there was nothing in particular. I was rather surprised that there was nothing [she did not know]. (laugh) (H4)

It is clear that H4 did not expect her student to have so much prior knowledge. On the whole, these host families were impressed by their students' basic understanding of everyday Japanese cultural practices. They often praised their understanding, attributing it to their studies prior to staying with their host families. This in turn suggests that host families assume their roles in teaching Japanese culture. That is, host families' expectations are that these students are to learn these cultural lessons during the homestay. Apart from basic daily matters, salient topics were stories about Japanese popular culture:

アニメと漫画がすごく好きみたいでよく知っていて、日本の漫画が海外で有名な事は聞いた事があったのでそれにはびっくりしなかったんですけど、彼女の思い入れの強さにびっくりしました。漫画をたくさん買い込んでいたので、「ちょっと、見せて。」なんて、見せてもらって。（笑）[…] すごく詳しくて反対に色々教えてもらいました

She really loved *anime* and *manga*. She knew them well. I had heard that Japanese manga was famous overseas so that did not surprise me. I was surprised at how strongly she felt about that. She bought lots of *manga* so I said, "Show me a bit," and she showed me. (laugh) [⋯] She just knew a lot and on the contrary, she taught me various things about it. (H4)

The particular Japanese expression, *"hantaini"* in the last sentence deserves attention. This literally means "on the contrary" or "quite the opposite." The usage of this expression differs slightly between English and Japanese. In English, it is necessary to clearly state what the two opposing facts are side by side. However, in Japanese, two opposing facts can be subsumed into the context and it is not necessarily explained explicitly. The last sentence "she just knew a lot and on the contrary, she taught me various things about it" describes H4's surprise about the student teaching her about Japanese popular culture as opposed to H4 teaching her student. Hence, the use of "on the contrary" in this context suggests that H4 views teaching Japanese culture as her job, and she did not expect to find herself in the position of the learner. Curiously, two other host parents say exactly the same thing when talking about popular culture:

最近はもうインタネットとかユーチューブで色々オーストラリアでも見られるみたいで、私より色々知っていました。アニメとか日本の最近の若い歌手とか反対に教えてくれて、びっくりしました。ほんと、アニメ見ても私は「これ何？」みたいな感じで、これは何々だって教えてもらったりして（笑）

It seems that they can see various Japanese things on the Internet and YouTube and things like that even in Australia. He knew various things more than I do. On the contrary [to me teaching], he taught me things like *anime* and Japanese latest young singers so I was surprised about that. Really, even when I saw *anime*, I was like, "What is this?" then I was taught what they were (laugh) (H5)

最初にホストした子は、「オタク文化」や「コスプレ」に興味があって、やたらアニメの話とか知っていましたね。インタネットでアニメとかアイドル系の番組とかよく見るって、言っていました。僕なんか全然知らなくて、反対に教えてもらったりして。（笑）

Our first kid was interested in "*Otaku* (nerd) culture" and "cosplay." She knew lots about things like *anime*. She was saying that she often watches *anime* and idol

> programs on the internet. I didn't know about these things at all, and on the contrary [to us teaching], she taught us. (laugh) (H8)

Just as with H4, both H5 and H8 use the expression *hantaini* when describing the fact that their students taught them about Japanese popular culture. This shows their view of the role reversal when a host family gets taught about Japanese culture by a student. Therefore, it reinforces the belief that it is their role to teach Japanese culture rather than to act as a co-learner.

In summary, the host families conscientiously take on many roles, sometimes simultaneously. In addition to caring for their host students as a family member, they also assume tutoring roles for Japanese language and culture. Particularly in the language teaching aspect, all the host families make a considerable effort. These multiple roles accumulate, leading to a demanding juggle at times for both hosts and students. This intensity generates difficulties for some students as we shall see in the following section 8.3.

8.3 Host families' roles as local tour guides

Amongst multiple roles both hosts and students adopt are those of tour guide (hosts) and special house guest (students). Both the hosts and the students share many anecdotal stories about their excursions together to tourist sites. In "real" everyday life, family members normally do not go out every weekend, but that is what often happened during the homestay. Hence, this aspect shows that what the participants actually experienced is a special version of ordinary everyday life. Japanese language and cultural classes are held at the host university from 9 am until around 3 pm on weekdays, so the weekends potentially offer uninterrupted time with the host families. In some households, students were also taken out on weekdays after university classes, and on weekends, all the students were taken out on a variety of excursions. From these accounts, it is evident that these host families care for their students both as a temporary family member and a special overseas guest. Simultaneously, some students faced difficulties in coping with these exceedingly busy event-filled weeks.

S7 and S8 nominated outings with the host family as one of the "good things" about homestay:

> They take you out. They take you on tours and stuff like that and you do not have to pay for it. They drive you around and you get to visit things together. As opposed to having a touristy experience, you can get to go to these places together. (S7)

> Homestay, um, if they have time, they know where is a good place to go, not just a place you see on the guidebook. They can take you there, rather than working out how you get there and so on. That's one of the good things. (S8)

Indeed, the students who made journal entries all wrote about the many places they were taken by their families and detailed their activities together. One interview question asked the students about how they spent the weekends, to which they all responded by listing well-known tourist places where their respective families took them. The following two examples provide a typical snapshot:

> On the first weekend, my host brother took me to *Osaka jō* (*Osaka* castle), that was really cool. On the way home, we visited *Nanba* quickly. The next day, on Sunday, we didn't do much except for going out to the "forgetting the year" party. On the next weekend, we went to the Universal Studio and then to *Nara* on the next day, with my host mother and father as well. Yeah: I was really lucky that they had the free time for all that. (S6)

> Um, we got there on Saturday. So, the first weekend we went to *inu no pātii* [dogs' party] (laugh) somewhere in a big park! Well, these are the dogs which used to be in shelters? There were about 200 dogs there. It was amazing. It was really funny. (laugh) Then, on Sunday, *Ueno* Zoo *ni itta* [We went to Ueno Zoo]. Then we also went to *Ameyoko*? A big shopping mall. Um, the second weekend on Saturday, that's right, *Tokyo Edo* museum *ni itta* [went to Tokyo Edo museum]. Then we went to a restaurant. *Nichiyōbini Fujisan ni itta* [went to Mt *Fuji* on Sunday]. (S3)

These and other similar descriptions all portray how the students' weekends with their families were packed with outings. Perhaps because these stays are short, these host families show enthusiasm to take their students out to as many tourist spots as possible. Considering

the limited number of places that can be visited during a short stay, it requires careful planning. One host even adopted a checklist approach as recounted by S4:

> She [The host mother] had a kind of like a little checklist that I should try while I am in Japan. She also had a list of food that I should eat. Or where I wanted to go? She asked me what I wanted to do and she crossed it out if I had done it already. If I haven't done something, they sent their son to take me, like we went to *Nara*, *Kobe*, you know. (S4)

This approach highlights one host parent's enthusiasm in taking on the role of a tour organiser. The students simply see the host families' tour organiser/guide role as advantageous although this special treatment poses a contradiction about experiencing so-called everyday life. From the viewpoint of presenting everyday life and treating the student as a family member, it is unnecessary to take them on so many outings, but in reality, conscious effort, energy, time and expense go into this tour-guiding aspect. Hence, in the tourist situation, the students are treated more as a special guest rather than a family member. On the other hand, the implication of this particular situation for the host family is that there is a tension between the daily routine and feeling obliged to take their guest out to somewhere special. For instance, a family with school age children are normally quite busy with after school activities. Therefore, going out together to run daily errands and to pick up the children should be considered as participating in ordinary life. Yet, H9 apologetically reflects on the number of outings she managed:

> あまり遠くない所で、週末はミュージアムとか観光地には連れて行ってあげることは出来たんですが［…］子供の送り迎えとかに行ったりしなければならなかったので、思うようには彼女をあちこちに連れて行ってあげられなかったのが申し訳なかったような気がします。
>
> We did take her to a museum and tourist sites located not too far on the weekend, but my two children have different schedules. […] we had to go to pick children up and we could not take her around as much as we wanted. I feel sorry about that. (H9)

H9 did take her student out to tourist spots on the weekend. However, during weekdays, H9 and the student did things like dropping off and picking up the two children for soccer, piano

and other activities. In other words, they followed the family routine together. Even though her student was incorporated into the family's day-to-day activities, H9 was still concerned about whether she did enough. In a similar vein, H5 expressed her concern about weekdays:

> 今回、ちっちゃい子供がいたので私も平日はそんなにかまってあげられなくて、悪かったかななんて思ってるんですけど。私は平日はそんなにどこにも連れて行ってあげられない状態で、今回はまあ土日は主人がいるし家族でどこかに車で遊びに出かけたりすることは出来たんですけど。
>
> On this occasion, I could not do much for him during the weekdays as I had a little child so I feel bad about that. I was in a situation where I could not take him anywhere on weekdays, but my husband was at home on Saturday and Sunday so we were able to go out somewhere by car. (H5)

H5 had previously participated in the homestay program five times with her parents before her marriage. This occasion was the first time that she became a host mother with her new household. As their child was only a year old, it naturally limited her capacity to spend time with their student compared with her previous hosting opportunities. Despite the weekend family outings, she still regrets not doing more for the latest student. These comments indicate their views on the student's status as a special visitor, which prompted considerable efforts to make the most of their short visit.

The homestay students clearly enjoyed many interesting extra-curricular activities and excursions. However, while they generally had a great time at these outings, it became far too excessive for some students. These host family outings were on top of various out-of-class activities and excursions organised by the host universities. Hence, the students' weekdays as well as weekends were packed from morning until night. Yet, they were still supposed to fulfil their role as a family member by conversing over dinner about their day. Therefore, excessively hectic schedules caused problems for some students. S4 and S2, who were previously quoted complaining about language difficulties, also commented on how busy and tired they felt at times:

I'm too tired to write well because every day is so full. I have to concentrate when I come home so I can understand my host family. There are no breaks! (S4, journal entries, Day 6)

I went to various shops with my host mother […] It's been nice not to have to do anything today. It's the first day since I've been in Japan that I've been able to relax. (S2, journal entries, Day 9)

I wish I had known how much things we are doing every day. I didn't think we were doing so much in the afternoon? Yeah, that's right. I wish I had known how much I would go out with the volunteer students. (S2)

S2 never complained about being taken out to various excursions with the host family and family friends. Elsewhere he wrote how enjoyable outings were. Yet it is noteworthy what he wrote about his reaction to an unstructured day. S2 found it relaxing when he just rode a bicycle with his host mother to go to nearby shops. In addition, another comment in the interview highlights the fact that he had to go out with other students much more than he had expected. Thus, it is not just host families, but also students who are busy. The students' hectic schedules can clash with the host family's equally busy agenda. At the end of her interview, H5 brought up a situation she faced as an episode that annoyed her:

１つだけちょっと気になった事として思い出したのが、結構プログラムのアクティビティーがいっぱいいっぱいで、「疲れた」と言って、ドタキャンする事がわりとありましたね。なんか日本人は絶対しないというか、無理してでも約束したら何とかするというか道場が見たいっていうんで知り合いの知り合いを通して見に行かせてもらえるように、手配していたんですが、本人は最初は行くっていってなんか疲れているみたいだったからこっちも一応気を使って「本当に大丈夫？行ける？」って聞いたら、当日ぎりぎりに「実はやっぱりすごく疲れているから無理」ってことになって。結構アレンジするのが大変だったので、ちょっとむっとしましたかね。

I just remembered something that bothered me. The program is full of activities. Because of that, they often said "I am tired." and cancelled our arrangements at the last minute. Somehow Japanese never do things like that or Japanese would manage to make it once they promise no matter what. The student said that he wanted to see a Martial Arts training hall so I asked for an arrangement through the acquaintance of

an acquaintance. First he said he would go, but he looked tired so I paid attention and asked, “Are you sure it is OK? Can you make it?” After all that, he eventually cancelled it saying, “Actually I am exhausted so it is impossible.” It was quite hard to make the arrangement so it annoyed me. (H5)

Earlier H5 was quoted for her apologetic feelings about not taking the latest student out enough despite her special efforts in making the arrangement for a particular outing. Martial Arts training halls are usually not readily accessible to outsiders, and using “the acquaintance of an acquaintance” suggests that contacting the person in charge was not straightforward. Considering these complexities, it is understandable that H5 felt upset about the last-minute cancellation. Nevertheless, from the student’s viewpoint, he has been occupied with other outings with fellow students in addition to the on-campus studies. He was simply too exhausted to go out to yet another excursion. If one is simply too tired, an Australian student would just want to take it easy at home. H5’s opinion that a Japanese person would stick to a promise no matter what is debatable. Her critical comment raises a question as to whether H5’s student is allowed to express his preference honestly and simply relax. He is expected to manage to cope with another outing in the stoic Japanese way. In a sense, he is expected to fulfil his role as a special guest rather than just being a family member. As he did not fulfil the role, H5 forms a negative perception of her student. This contradictory position manifests itself further in the comment that follows the previous quote:

レストランとか予約していた時も、どうせ断るなら自分から言って欲しいんですけどね。「今日大丈夫よね？」と、当日確認したら、、「疲れたから。」と言って、キャンセルしたりする。今まで、皆そうだったので、慣れたというか、期待してはいけないと思いながら対応すれば、腹も立たなくなったというか。慣れですね。

It also happened when we had a booking at a restaurant. If they want to decline, I want them to tell me themselves. When I check with them on the day, saying “are you all right today?” they say things like “I am tired.” and cancel it. Well, everyone was like that so far so I got used to it in a way. I could also say that I stopped getting angry when I started handling it without expecting too much. I got used to it. (H5)

In other words, H5 wants the student to initiate cancelling the arrangement rather than as a response to her question. Once again, it seems ambivalent whether students are supposed to

answer as a close family member, or as a guest/visitor, when they are asked if they are all right. As the former, it is acceptable to say how they honestly feel although in the latter role, it appears that they are obliged to force themselves to respond to the host's hospitality. H5's ambiguous stance reveals the nature of the multiple roles for both herself and her homestay student.

In summary, host families keenly assist students to maximise their short stay by facilitating excursions to as many places as possible. Accordingly, both hosts and students shift into another role on the top of their multiple other roles. With the hosts performing a tour guide role, the student's status turns into a special guest rather than simply a family member. This creates contradictory and complex situations that affect their relational dynamics. While the family is supposed to carry on with their usual life style, the actual time spent together is rather a specially tailored version of Japanese life. On the one hand, students are to play a role as a family member, often specifically as a child in the family, while also fulfilling a role as a guest on the other. Therefore, the students are in a double-bind trying to fulfil both obligations as a family member and as a special guest. The fact that both hosts and students simultaneously try to fulfil these multi-layered roles in an intercultural setting can generate difficulties for both groups at times.

8.4 Cultural differences and Japaneseness

The data suggest that the attention of both host families and students were often drawn to their cultural differences. The host families in particular considered certain cultural practices, values and behaviours as uniquely Japanese. This phenomenon possibly reflects *kokusaika* and *Nihonjin-ron* discourses reviewed earlier (see 2.5), which circulate widely in Japanese society, influencing educational policies, classrooms as well as individuals. This section draws on how experiencing cultural differences is discussed among both students and host families. The analysis highlights the situation where some host families accentuate differences at the dinner table by modifying their usual style. It also reflects how the host families consciously or unconsciously hold beliefs regarding "Japaneseness."

The perception that homestays are an opportunity to experience different cultures prevails across all the accounts from both host families and their students. All the students commented

that experiencing intercultural differences first hand is a good aspect of homestay. The following two quotes show representative views among the students:

> Good things, uh, in other countries, a good thing is that I get to learn what I never do back in my country. You can see and learn what people do in other countries. What I mean is, I don't do this, but they do it in different ways, like washing with water running? (S9)

> It was interesting to see how people, how well, it is a little bit different, how people live differently, I guess. (S1)

On the whole, all the students had their attention drawn to the fact that the Japanese way of life is different from their own. S7, who had experienced homestays in the Netherlands prior to the latest homestay, expressed particularly strong views on experiencing difference as what to expect from a homestay:

> You know, you got to adapt. You must be open to new things. You are going into a totally different culture. You are going into a totally different language. You are going into a new family who is totally different from your own family. So, as long as you are open-minded about what you are going to experience, you should be able to cope with, whatever even if it is DIFFERENT. You know, keeping it in your mind that people are different and people do different things. (S7)

Throughout her interview transcript, she frequently used "different." In this quote alone, she used the adjective "different" six times to refer to what a participant should expect in a homestay experience. Elsewhere these students talk about understanding Japanese culture as being a major benefit of homestay, but there is not necessarily a link between experiencing the difference and understanding another culture. Nonetheless, from students' perspectives, they seem satisfied on the whole with their experience of the cultural differences embedded in everyday life. Their expectations are fulfilled by confirming that Japanese culture is different from their culture through the intercultural experience.

The view that experiencing cultural differences is among the benefits of homestay is echoed among host families. One interview question on what they see as positive aspects of being

involved as a host family attracted various responses including “because it is interesting,” “because it gives excitement.” While they all explicitly stated that they enjoyed the overall experience for a combination of reasons, four host parents specifically drew on experiencing different cultures. First time participant H9 is one of them:

> 元々私の昔の仕事で海外からの人との交流が多く、やめて１２年になりますが、その頃から異文化交流に興味がありまして、あと主人も外資系の会社に勤めていて海外に行くことも結構ありますし、異文化交流に興味がありますし[…] 子供にとっても異文化に触れるいい機会だなと思って、初めて参加する事にしたんですが、楽しかったです。
>
> I originally had lots to do with people from overseas at my previous job. It is 12 years since I quit, but I have had interests in cross-cultural exchange since then. In addition, my husband works for foreign financed company, quite often goes overseas and he is also interested in cross-cultural exchange. […] I thought it was a good opportunity for my children to be in touch with a different culture. So, we decided to participate for the first time and it was fun. (H9)

From this excerpt, H9’s motivation for the homestay participation can be summarised as stemming from two points: her interests in the cross-cultural exchange and the belief that *Ibunka ni fureru* [to be in touch with a different culture] is a good thing for the whole family. The expression “*Ibunka ni fureru”* is used by three more host families when explaining a beneficial aspect of offering homestay:

> よかったことはね、やっぱり異文化に触れることですよね。私達の知らない異文化。特に私の場合、日本から出たことなくて、海外に行ったことがないもんですから。
>
> As for a good thing, as you expect, it is to be in touch with a different culture. A different culture that we do not know. Especially in my case, I have never been outside Japan. Never been overseas. (H2)

> 言葉でうまく言えないんですが、言葉で言い表せない異文化の実体験というのか、異文化に触れるというのか、それが出来るのがいいかなと。

I am not sure how to put it into words, but it is good to be able to really experience different cultures, or be in touch with different cultures, which cannot be expressed in words. (H3)

日本にいながらにして他の文化に触れられることはいいですよね。

It is good that I can be in touch with other cultures while I stay in Japan, isn't it? (H5)

While they all consistently view "being in touch with different cultures" as a good thing, they are silent about what they learnt from the intercultural encounters. Hence, this creates the impression that they may not necessarily hold a great expectation of gaining knowledge about the student's cultural background. In fact, the host families show little interest in learning about Australian culture and customs from students. The following excerpts from H1 and H5, which are responses to a question on whether there is anything they learnt about Australia, Australian customs or culture, demonstrate this view:

H: ううん、特にないね。まあ、自分が行くまでは分からない。オーストラリアに行ったことがないからさ、オーストラリアではどうするのなんて聞かないしさ。

W: そうね、こちらも都会の生活であちらもオーストラリアの都会の生活でしょう？例えば、「こんな時どう言うの？」って聞くけど、「どうするの？」とは聞かないわね。

H: Umm. not in particular. Well, I do not know until I go there myself. I have never been to Australia and I do not ask how they do things in Australia.

W: That's right. We have a city lifestyle and they have a city lifestyle in Australia, right? For example, we may ask "what do you say on this occasion?", but we do not ask "what do you do?" (H1)

私も結構海外旅行していますし、オーストラリアにも旅行していますし、特に発展途上国から来ているとかだったら、事情とか文化が違うかもしれないですけど（笑）オーストラリアも日本もまあ同じって言うか、そんなに変わった習慣があるとは思いませんからね（笑）聞きもしなかったし、考えもしなかったというか。

I have been overseas quite a lot and I have also been to Australia. If one comes from a developing country in particular, their situation and culture may be different (laugh) I feel both Australia and Japan are the same, and I do not think that they have that

> strange customs (laugh) I did not ask such questions and I didn't even think about that, either. (H5)

It is clear that neither H1 nor H5 expected to find out about Australian culture or customs from their homestay students. In other words, the host families did not seek for their students to play a role in teaching them about Australian culture. In fact, only one comment was brought up as an example of expecting to learn something about Australia from a student. It was about Australian cuisine and only H4 commented on her student not being able to teach her Australian cooking as a small disappointment from the homestay experience. Thus, overall the host families express very little curiosity to find out about Australian culture and their focus is on their teaching rather than learning.

One possible consequence from their Japanese cultural teaching role is that the hosts often consciously or unconsciously label certain behaviours as uniquely "Japanese." Their beliefs are manifested in a range of comments that certain characteristics belong to Japanese people. For example, earlier in 8.3, when H5 complained about the last minute cancellation of appointments by students, her opinion was that a Japanese person would never do things like that and would manage to keep the promise. This claim reflects the idealised image of a Japanese person. This way of perceiving certain thoughts and/or behaviours as homogeneously applicable to all the Japanese can be associated with *Nihonjin-ron* discourse. Indeed the host families often showed a clear belief on what a Japanese person would or would not do or say:

> ちょっと思い出したんですけど来る前の自己 PR で「自分は法学部だから頭がいい」みたいなことを書いてあって、家族で読んで思わず笑ってしまったんですね。日本人はまあ絶対言わないですよね。（笑）
>
> I remember something in her own self introduction given to us before she came, she said something like "I study law so I am smart" kind of things. Our family read it and laughed, you know. A Japanese person, definitely, would not say that kind of thing, would we? (laugh) (H9)

H9's comment highlights the stereotypical view that a Japanese person would not boast about themselves. This, in turn, draws on the idea of the Japanese being typically humble. One

well-known Japanese formulaic expression refers to this humbleness. It is typically listed in Japanese textbooks and students are often instructed to use the expression when giving a gift. H5's student used the expression and she describes the family's reaction:

> お土産を頂いたんですけど、「これ、つまらないものですが。」って、日本語で言ってくれたんですね。それはきっと日本語のクラスで「日本ではそう言って渡すのよ。」って、指導されたんだろうなって思って、みんなで思いながら思わず笑ってしまったんですけどね。まあなんか変な感じがしましたけど、それは教えられたとおり素直にきいたんだろうと（笑）でもやっぱり、日本人は儀式的に使いますけど、そこだけ日本文化を強調しているというか海外の方はもっと自信を持って人に物をあげるわけでしょう？「これ素敵でしょう？」とか。私も物をあげる時は謙遜しますけど、日本人は、謙遜を美徳と思っているところがあるからね。
>
> We received souvenirs and she gave them to us saying "*Kore, Tsumaranai mono desu ga* (this is an insignificant thing, but)" in Japanese. We thought that she must have been instructed in her Japanese class, "this is what you say in giving a gift in Japan." While we thought that way, we could not help laughing. We felt it was a little strange, but we thought she obediently said what she was told to say. (laugh) But, after all, Japanese people would use the expression like a ritual. But that expression emphasised only that aspect of Japanese culture. People overseas give a gift more confidently, don't they? Saying things like "Isn't this fantastic?" I also become humble when I give something to people. It's because Japanese people believe that humbleness is a virtue, right? (H5)

H5 draws a clear distinction between Japanese people and others. In her opinion, a non-Japanese person using the particular phrase sounds strange as they are not expected to feel humble. Thus, H5 suggests that humbleness is an attribute that is particularly Japanese. Apart from humbleness, another commonly held stereotypical view is that Japanese is a "high-context" culture (Hall, 1977) so people can be ambiguous with their expressions, expecting the listener to read between the lines. H3 made the following comment when reflecting on a few unpleasant memories that she recalled over her more than 10 years of homestay host family experience:

日本人的に「またいつでも来てね。日本のうちだと思ってね。」なんて言うものの、びっくりしましたね。[…] 逆に言えばね、日本人的に「またいつでも来てね。日本のお母さんよ。」なんて、簡単に言っちゃいけないんだろうと。でも日本人はね、言うじゃないですか。またいつでも来てって。

Although I said things in a typically Japanese way, "You can come again anytime. Please feel that this is your Japanese home," I was shocked. […] If you reverse it, I perhaps should not easily say things in the typically Japanese way, "please come again anytime. I am your Japanese mother." But, a Japanese person, you know, say "please come again anytime," don't they? (H3)

This is about the incident in which a former homestay student turned up at her door unannounced a year after the initial homestay. She believes that "please come again anytime" is a typically Japanese expression to say to a guest, regardless of the real intention. This claim holds no water as similar courteous expressions are probably used in English-speaking countries such as Australia. Once again, what is noteworthy about this is that H3 views the expression as being quintessentially Japanese.

Another behaviour considered as a Japanese attribute is expressed as *ki o tsukau* (to be considerate, to be sensitive to other's feelings). H7 brought up this as a common Japanese trait. She even links the particular trait to a possible reason for people not participating in homestay programs:

私の知り合いの中でも […] 勧めたんですけど、食事の支度が無理という人が多いですね。やはり日本人は気を使うから。ねえ、気を使うでしょう。何でも出せばいいんですけどね。せっかく来るんだからという気持ちを持っちゃうんでしょうね。

Among many of my acquaintances […] I recommended [to offer homestay], but many say that they cannot do all the meal preparation. It is because Japanese are considerate after all. You know, the Japanese are considerate, aren't they? It is all right to serve any meal, isn't it? I guess we feel, "they came all this way." (H7)

The point about serving any meal is related to the idea of presenting ordinary everyday life. The host families supposedly stick to their usual daily routines. However, the view that H7's acquaintances hold about the difficulty of the meal preparation suggests that they feel the

need to offer something special rather than their usual meals. In fact, there is some evidence that what the students have been served is not necessarily what the family usually eats:

> My host mother tried to cook something different every night and make me eat something I have not tried before. One night she cooked a meal and did not tell me what it was. She was going to make me guess (laugh) […] after I have eaten a bit, my host mum said, "Oh, you might not know what it is." So, I kind of stopped eating and freaked out. And she told me that it was a jelly fish. (laugh) Well, I tried everything. (S3)

> I ate lots of things I usually do not eat, like seaweed thingies? even flowers, thin squid paper-like stuff? You know that thing you get from *Enoshima* island? It is made really really thin and looks like chippies? (S7)

A jelly fish, flowers or thin squid paper-like food seem unlikely to be consumed on a daily basis. Unlike Iino's study (1996), the data does not contain any stories involving *nattō*, fermented soy beans presented as an authentic Japanese food. However, in the clear attempt to serve exotic foods, the similarity emerges, in which the host mothers made a conscious effort to try to serve something "special." The students in the present study observe that they ate what Japanese people would normally eat, though in fact that may be a very special version of what they usually eat. In fact, S3's host mother clearly made considerable efforts to serve different dishes every day. Simultaneously, a great concern is noted about serving quintessentially Japanese food in two host mothers' comments:

> 食事が一番困りました。何を食べさせたらいいんだろうと悩みましたね。私は日本食は得意じゃないので。なんか日本食っぽいものをあまり食べさせてあげられなかった気がします。朝はパンとかシリアルが好きらしいのでそれでよかったんですが。[…] よくみなさんから「よくやったわね。食事のしたく、大変だったでしょう。」とか言われたんですが、やっぱり、ホームステイの食事の準備は大変だって思う人は多いみたいですね。
>
> I got distressed about meals most. I worried about what I should serve her. It is because I am not good at cooking Japanese cuisine. Somehow I felt I wasn't able to serve her proper Japanese dishes enough. Breakfast was OK with cereals. […] People

> often told me, “You have done well. It must have been hard to prepare meals.” As you expect, many people seem to think that meal preparations for homestay are hard. (H9)
>
> 全体的な感想は想像通りというか、思った通り、食事の支度が結構大変でしたね。家族だけだったら出来合いの惣菜買ってくる時もあるんですけど。せっかく来てくださっているんだから、日本のものを手作りでとか思っちゃったんで。[…] もう少し肩の力を抜いて気軽に構えてもよかったんですが。なるべく手作りにしたかったので。
> Overall comments are, just as I expected, the meal preparation was hard. If it is only family members, I occasionally bring home take-away. She came all the way to our house so I felt that I should do home-made cooking to prepare something Japanese. […] I should have been more relaxed about that. I wanted to make it home-made as much as possible. (H7)

As quintessentially Japanese cuisine, people often may think about *sushi*, *tempura* and *teriyaki* among other dishes, but in reality, a variety of Western style dishes are widely consumed in Japan. H9 has two primary school children and in her households, she usually cooks Western dishes such as spaghetti or curry and rice, as they are the children’s favourites. In a way, H9’s student was served what the family usually eat. Nevertheless, H9 felt pressured to serve something more genuinely Japanese. In fact, elsewhere H9 mentioned cooking *takoyaki* (octopus savoury balls). This is not what the family usually eats at home, but they decided to serve it and H9 was pleased that her student liked it. The idea of preparing something Japanese is also expressed in H7’s comment. These stories highlight the fact that there was a tension between what these families usually eat and what they see as ideal “Japanese cuisine” that should be served for homestay students.

In summary, both students and host families often claim that experiencing a different culture is a benefit of homestay. For some families, it forms a part of the reason for offering homestay. What the data analysis has found is the trend that expectations of experiencing differences also lead host families to reinforce their Japanese identity by considering certain attributes as Japaneseness. Simultaneously, host families display a conscious approach to presenting what they see as quintessentially Japanese for their students, which influences them to modify their everyday practices.

8.5 Chapter conclusion

The concept of homestay as an international exchange shaped clear expectations in teaching and learning among both groups of participants. Host families diligently assumed teaching roles for Japanese language and culture. Their conscientious efforts highly satisfied students' expectations about benefitting from language and culture learning. Another role that host families assumed was as a tour guide/organiser, which in turn shifted their students to a role as a special guest. Hence, in addition to acting as a family member during the stay as discussed in Chapter 6, both groups find themselves attempting to fill multi-layered roles simultaneously. Juggling these multiple, sometimes contradictory roles generated unanticipated difficulties and problematic situations for both groups. While students find the overall homestay experience enjoyable and beneficial, the unexpected greater intensity of the actual experience is particularly challenging for beginning level students. Host families also enjoy the overall intercultural experiences as a rare opportunity to experience different cultures. Nevertheless, trying to let students experience ordinary Japanese life while being both a language and culture tutor and tour guide sometimes generates intensity in the actual experience.

The findings also highlight the curious paradoxical attitudes that some host families demonstrated in learning about different cultures. On the one hand, they explicitly profess interest in the homestay opportunity for international exchange yet lack curiosity to learn about students' cultures on the other. Instead, host families' enthusiasm manifests primarily only in teaching about Japan. Host families favourably view the concept of international exchanges embedded in homestay, which reflects internationalisation efforts prevailing in Japanese higher education and the wider society. They value experiencing different cultures through intercultural experiences; however, their expectations do not necessarily extend to learning about students' cultures.

Host families' expectations seem fulfilled though simultaneously, experiencing different cultures sometimes leads them to reflect on certain attributes as Japaneseness. Consciously or unconsciously, they seem to hold beliefs that certain behaviours and ways of thinking are uniquely Japanese. Thus, the homestay context created an opportunity for the host families to reinforce their Japanese identity.

Chapter 9. Conclusion and implications

This final chapter synthesises the findings of the thesis and highlights its original contributions to the field of intercultural studies. While it acknowledges the project's limitations, it discusses the implications of the findings for advising future participants of short SA programs. It concludes with a discussion of avenues for future research.

9.1 Synthesis of the findings

This study aimed to discover in what ways the particular context of Japanese short-term homestay – an important component of short SA programs to Japan – shapes the intercultural experiences and relational dynamics between students from Australian universities and families that host such students. The three sub-questions steering the analysis were:

1. What kinds of expectations do the participants bring to the short homestay, and to what extent are these fulfilled?
2. What effect does the short homestay context have on the kinds of roles and relationships possible for students and host families?
3. How does the international exchange aspect of homestay shape expectations in relation to the teaching and learning experience?

The main data source consisted of 18 in-depth individual semi-structured interviews (nine students and nine host families). Analysis of the interviews together with the journals recorded by five students identified commonalities and contrasts in perceptions of certain aspects of their intercultural experiences among students and host families. Simultaneously, this qualitative research brought to light rich individual differences in the ways in which both students and host families interpret and react to their intercultural experiences. The findings provide insights into some intriguing characteristics related to relational dynamics. In particular, the thesis elucidated how Japanese host families' paradoxical attitudes, expectations and intercultural experiences both during and after the stay were shaped by the specific context of short-term homestay.

9.1.1 Answer to research sub-question 1

What kinds of expectations do the participants bring to the short homestay, and to what extent are these fulfilled?

Certain similarities in expectations were found among students and host families. Students were to be treated as part of the respective host family, and to embed themselves as a temporary resident rather than as a tourist. The homestay was also expected to allow students to learn the Japanese language and culture through immersion in everyday life. In addition to these expectations, both students and host families also expected to experience mutually different cultures.

These expectations reflect the impressions generated in the SA official publications by Australian universities examined in chapter 4. SA was claimed to be beneficial for gaining improved foreign language skills, cultural understanding and new friendships, as well as for experiencing life as a resident as opposed to a tourist. As discussed in chapter 4, the importance of students having international experiences through participating in SA is widely supported by Australian tertiary institutions for fostering their intercultural competence. For this reason, through their internationalisation strategies, a majority of Australian higher education promote outbound mobility opportunities – one or two semesters, or shorter ones such as the program examined in the present study – for students. Therefore, SA homestay programs form a part of the higher education curriculum in Australian universities. The extent to which SA official publications influence students' expectations is debatable. Nonetheless, the impressions that are produced by these publications overlap with the expectations that emerged from the participants' personal accounts in the present study.

In terms of the extent to which such expectations are fulfilled, the progress in learning Japanese language and culture through immersion in everyday Japanese life generally satisfied the students. In a similar vein, the students' expectations of experiencing a different culture were satisfactorily met. However, certain mismatches were found between expectations and actual experiences surrounding the idea of students being welcomed as a family member, which resulted in mixed reactions among the students. The respective interpretations of what constitutes being a family member did not totally coincide. Host parents expected students to engage in particular behaviours in their home such as making conversation over dinner and following family rules. In some families, host parent roles in

relation to their respective students were manifested in their constant attention and concern about the students' welfare. On the other hand, from the students' perspectives, most did not expect to be treated as a "child" in the host family. Consequently, the actual experience surprised many students in both positive and negative ways. The assigning of roles including that of a child in the host family will be discussed further in the answer to the second sub-question (section 9.1.2).

The most noteworthy gap between the expectations of students and their host families concerned post-stay communication. From the students' viewpoint, there was not necessarily an expectation for post-stay correspondence. Yet, host families generally valued ongoing post-stay communication in forms such as thank you notes, postcards, phone calls, or even reunions. Any unfulfilled expectation greatly impacted on host families' overall impression of their intercultural experience, and a lack of communication in some cases dominated the hosts' whole memory of the homestay experience long after the stay. By contrast, the students appeared totally unaware of the consequences of not fulfilling the host families' implicit expectations in this regard. While post-stay communication (or the lack of it) was a prominent topic among host parents, the topic was strikingly absent from the students' accounts. Clearly, correspondence after homestay is differently envisaged among the two groups, with host parents tending to cherish it, sometimes in a sentimental way, even if they do not explicitly expect it. This, however, is not to say that students are unwilling to engage in communication after their departure. Some host families and their students enjoy friendship long after their initial stay while other relationships end when the short stay concludes. The fact that the homestay was for only a few weeks may have contributed to the student's lack of expectation for a long-term relationship. In a long term stay, students may be more likely to envisage a post-stay on-going relationship with their host families. The interview data demonstrates that mismatched expectations regarding communication after the stay can damage an otherwise amicable relationship established during the stay.

Fundamentally, the students viewed their experiences as beneficial in enabling them to constantly practice Japanese, immerse themselves into everyday Japanese culture, and enjoy various outings. The host families also reflected positively on the overall experience as enjoyable with a few families seeing the homestay as an annual highlight. On the whole, the expectations that both groups of participants consciously or unconsciously held about

homestay experience seemed largely fulfilled, but some aspects generated "culture bumps" (Archer, 1986).

9.1.2 Answer to research sub-question 2

What effect does the short homestay context have on the kinds of roles and relationships possible for students and host families?

This thesis studied the particular effects that the short-term homestay context has on the kinds of roles and relationships possible for students and host families. One salient effect that emerged is the notion of instant family-ship. This entails instant intimacy, which dramatically affects interpersonal dynamics. In particular, instant family-ship creates parent-child relational dynamics in many of the households. The main problem the present thesis discovered is how unprepared students were for the role assigned to them in the family. While they appreciated being well cared for, they were also perplexed about and resented being treated as a child at times. As the students in the present study were aged between 18 and 21, from their perspective, they suddenly found themselves relegated to a role that they had outgrown in Australia. Clearly, the students underestimate the cross-cultural difference in the perception of their age group, even though they may have known that adulthood is considered to begin at age 20 in Japan. The students were unprepared for the constant concerns about their welfare, ranging from whether their clothing was warm enough to their whereabouts.

The parent-child relational dynamics varied between the families. Individual differences were observed in each household, depending on factors such as the ages of host parents and of students, family composition and students' gender. One situation was an empty nest family where a child had recently left home, thus the host student may have fulfilled the desire of the host mother to continue to play a mothering role. A very different situation emerged in a host family with a toddler child, where the host student's role was less likely to be confused with that of a child. It also depended on the family background of individual students as to whether or not they wished to be treated as an honorary child. The shift to suddenly becoming an only child in a host family is a very different experience depending on the size of the family one comes from and the level of independence one has previously enjoyed. Hence, various relational dynamics are created through the instant family-ship that impact on

the way that the host families treat their students and the way students react to the particular treatment.

Another prominent effect was the complex multiple roles that students and host families needed to juggle. Alongside the student's role as a family member, they shifted into the role of language and cultural learners as the host families undertook teaching roles. Therefore, instead of relaxing at home, these students with beginner to lower intermediate level language proficiency found themselves constantly needing to concentrate as they received language and culture lessons from their host families while communicating about their day in Japanese. The student's role also shifted into that of honoured guest when the host family took on yet another role as a tour guide. As a guest, the sometimes tired students strove to be polite and available for excursions organised by host families. Trying to fulfil these multiple roles – to be a family member and language learner as well as an honoured guest simultaneously – was often stressful for the students. As a family member, a student might feel that they could simply relax at home, but as an honoured guest, they might feel compelled to participate in all the tours offered. Being both a family member and an honoured guest makes it unclear whether they can or cannot refuse outings when exhausted from their packed schedules.

The host families too tried to fulfil multiple and sometimes contradictory roles. They acted as parents, personal tutors and tour guides, enthusiastically organising outings for their students. Although these host families were conscious of their nominal duty to allow the students to experience ordinary everyday Japanese life, they put considerable effort into taking them sightseeing and on excursions. That is, they created frequent sightseeing experiences that did not resemble ordinary everyday life. Rather, the excursions made the student's experience resemble that of a tourist, although both students and host families insisted on the everyday nature of the experience. In essence, they all perceived the homestay overall as beneficial and enjoyable, but the in-depth interviews elicited how intense the actual experience was when trying to fulfil these multiple and sometimes conflicting roles simultaneously. Hence, the findings reveal the intensity, complexity and difficulty of the intercultural experiences for both students and host families.

In longer term homestays, be it six months or one year, participants' experiences are likely to pan out differently. The issues described above – the relational dynamics generated by an instant family-ship, the intensity of the experience, and the difficulty of juggling multiple

occasionally contradictory roles – will play out differently over a longer time period. Some problems may be resolved and some aspects may be exacerbated with time. In a long term stay, family relations have more time to develop, and there is less need for host families to try to pack the time available with excursions for students. Hence, the specific context of short-term homestay is an important factor in producing these particular issues.

9.1.3 Answer to research sub-question 3

How does the international exchange aspect of homestay shape expectations in relation to the teaching and learning experience?

International exchange as a somewhat abstract goal of homestay featured more prominently in the interviews of the host families than those of the students. The host families explicitly indicated their interest in international exchange by referring to it as an important part of their motivation in offering homestay. They diligently taught Japanese language, culture and customs through their tutoring roles. An important side-effect of their enthusiasm was that some host families became extremely conscious about what to present as the Japanese way of life. In particular, novice host mothers put extra effort into trying to serve quintessential Japanese dishes. Curiously, they held certain culinary ideals regardless of what the family usually consume. Although they commented about striving to serve everyday Japanese food, what they actually served was not necessarily so. Hence, the phenomenon identified was that the host families' enthusiastic efforts to show everyday Japanese life often created a specially tailored version of this during the stay.

The goal of international exchange also raised the host families' expectations about experiencing different cultures through their daily interactions. This expectation is echoed among the students, and it is satisfactorily met by both groups as mentioned in section 9.1.1. Heightened awareness of intercultural differences led the host families to reflect on certain attributes as Japaneseness. Host families tended to reflect on the differences between, on the one hand, homestay student behaviour they perceived as odd, and on the other hand, the way Japanese people would behave and their underlying cultural values. They expressed a belief about certain behaviours and ways of thinking as being uniquely Japanese. Thus, the homestay context stimulated the host families to reinforce some cultural differences, and consequently their Japanese identity.

In terms of expectations in relation to learning experience, paradoxically host families demonstrated little interest in learning about Australian culture. Even though the host families explicitly claimed to be open to learning about other cultures, the data did not support their professed interest in understanding foreign students' cultural beliefs and practices. Comments in interviews suggest that they assumed Japanese and Australian cultures were not greatly different. As a result, there was very little curiosity to find out about Australian culture and customs. Instead, the host families' enthusiastic efforts were put into showcasing and teaching Japanese language and culture. Therefore, the study reveals paradoxes in attitudes towards these rather unbalanced international exchanges in the homestay.

9.1.4 Contribution of the findings

Homestays are generally recognised as avenues for language and culture learning as well as for fostering intercultural friendships. The study found that such widely held beliefs only partially reflect the actual intercultural experiences. Previous studies on homestay tend to place far more weight and focus on students: the outcomes that they achieve and the kinds of experiences they go through. By contrast, host families' perceptions are downplayed despite the fact that they are highly valued as a rich resource for students. This study sheds light on Japanese host families' perceptions and behaviours as well as students' by giving equal weight to the perceptions of both parties. The findings reveal how a variety of factors intertwine to shape the complexity and intensity of experiences for both students and host families in short-term Japanese homestays.

The literature review in Chapter 2 demonstrated that the nature of homestay depends on many variables including the nexus between host countries and students' countries of origin and their demographic profiles. The present thesis contributes in-depth knowledge about the intercultural experiences of Australian university students undertaking homestay in Japan on short-term SA programs and of Japanese families who host such students. It is important to note that this particular intercultural context brings together two specific demographics who are not simply representative of the broad range of Japanese and Australian citizens, and therefore cannot simply be extrapolated from more general information about the two national cultures. My contribution is in detailing how this specific intercultural context plays

out and what relational dynamics and perceptions are generated in order to enable educators to better advise future participants.

A concerning aspect is that both students and host families may be unaware of the differences in perceptions and of the consequences of their actions. After all, these host families and students stay together for only a few weeks. Hence, if problematic situations occur, it is quite possible to survive their short duration. They may think the stay went smoothly without being aware of the intercultural difficulties that arose. What is striking to discover is that even a successful stay can transform into a bitter memory after the stay, due to different expectations about post-stay communication. The negative experience not only leaves undesirable feelings but may discourage sensitive host families from offering homestays in the future. It is hoped that the insights gained in this study will contribute to enhancing the intercultural experiences of all participants.

9.2 Implications

A number of implications flow from the various findings of the present study. They raise a serious question about what can be done to learn from and resolve the various intercultural difficulties in the short-term homestay context. An additional question to ask is whether or not it is desirable to prevent such difficulties arising in the first place, because there are potentially learning and personal growth to be gained by going through these experiences. Hence, with regard to a student's possible treatment as a child by the host parents, avoidance is not necessarily possible or even desirable, but pre-alerting students may prevent them from generating negative reactions, and deepen the intercultural learning. In a similar vein, avoiding the intensity surrounding multiple roles may not be possible, but preparation for the experience is prudent. On the other hand, considering the potential negative impact of the gap in post-stay communication expectations, it is desirable to try to prevent this foreseeable problem from occurring.

As discussed in the literature review (see 2.1 and 2.2.1), a strong consensus among SA educators in recent years is that SA does not automatically create intercultural speakers. Students do not learn about other cultures simply by being in a foreign country, being exposed to different cultural milieus and experiencing intercultural communication with host

nationals. On the contrary, simple exposure to differences risks students producing or reinforcing prejudice, hostile feelings and stereotypical views. Therefore, in order to prevent such negative effects, what is needed is to provide the right kinds of scaffolding and support. In the literature concerning advising SA students, these are discussed in terms of interventions in the students' learning process. Vande Berg, Quinn and Menyhart (2012) contend that research evidence strongly suggests that:

> unless someone or something intervened in the learning of students abroad, helping them become aware of how they habitually frame events, and helping them develop the capacity to reframe events in ways that are effective and appropriate within a new cultural context, most of them would continue to experience events through that original frame (p. 388).

In other words, intervention is crucial to guide students towards realising that the way that they interpret their intercultural experiences is not the only way, and that they need to consider alternative perspectives. Therefore, one implication from the findings of this thesis is to consider what interventions are feasible. Appropriate interventions can minimise the risk of misunderstanding and/or developing stereotypical views, and thus enhance the intercultural experience for both groups. The literature about advising SA students demonstrates that there is not a single prescribed format which is appropriate and effective for all kinds of programs. Nonetheless, there are three possible phases where interventions can be implemented: pre-departure, during SA and post-return.

The major goals for pre-departure orientation range from providing essential practical information to motivating students to learn more about the host culture as well as their home culture. The goals also include guiding them to familiarise themselves with cross-cultural adaptability skills (Woody Thebodo & Marx, 2005, p. 294). Orientation can deal with both culture-specific and culture-general issues such as intercultural coping skills and theories about culture. Deardorff argues that they should "address intercultural competence before students go abroad" (2008, p. 42), suggesting the necessity for some form of prior training. Pre-departure briefings can be conducted in a variety of forms such as one-off sessions or multiple sessions, with or without participation by a student who had previously experienced the same SA program. Attendance at such sessions can be voluntary or compulsory, and the sessions can even be integrated into a credit-bearing academic course (Vande Berg, Quinn & Menyhart, 2012). Hence, even before students travel abroad, a range of possibilities are

available. Clearly, there is not just one form of orientation and it can be tailored as appropriate to the particular program and circumstances.

While students are abroad, they can be left to their own devices, or educators can intervene in the process of interpreting information and experiences. Depending on the type of program and institution, students might have access to accompanying, on-site or on-line cultural mentors for consultation when faced with intercultural issues. Regardless of the availability of cultural mentors, what seems to be a common practice is to require students to keep journals to record their cultural observations and intercultural experiences. Students can be required to submit journal entries only upon return (e.g., Jackson, 2006) or on-line during SA (e.g., Kippa, 2009). According to Deardorff (2011), many tertiary institutions are turning to e-portfolios including reflection papers and photos as a means of collecting evidence of students' intercultural learning (p. 74). These students' writings can signal whether proactive interventions are necessary while they are still abroad. This kind of journal keeping requirement is implemented in both one semester or one year programs and shorter programs. For example, Jackson (2006) explains that during a five week program in England, her Hong Kong students, who have undertaken an ethnographic course, are required to record their observations and reactions to each day's activities, describing confusing, disturbing and/or rewarding intercultural experiences. These journals are submitted to the teacher upon return, so the accounts can be used as sources for discussions during debriefing sessions.

In addition to the abundant possibilities for activities before and during SA, post-return de-briefing is well recognised as a vital method to allow students to validate their experience abroad. As DeNooy and Hanna (2003) point out, de-briefing sessions play a crucial role as they provide an opportunity to talk about significant life experiences, and their recollections can be organised as students tell their tales (p. 78). In their study, interviews were carried out as the method for data collection, but nonetheless they functioned as a debriefing. According to Coleman (2005), not only does de-briefing help students begin the process of reflection and making sense of the experience, but it provides them with strategies for maintaining the linguistic and other gains made, and provides information to enhance institutional arrangements for future cohorts (p. 130, see also Interculture Project). De-briefing sessions can be conducted independently regardless of journal keeping requirements, and on an individual basis or as a small group.

When combining all these potential approaches and activities across pre-departure, during SA and post-return phases, the possibilities are vast. The question arising is whether these three kinds of interventions are all feasible in the context of 2-3 week short-term homestay. Ideally, interventions should be implemented at all three phases; however, some may be too difficult in practice. In particular, given the intensity of the short period that is the object of the present study, adding a journal keeping task would be daunting for many students. As a matter of fact, when recruiting students to participate in the interview and journal writing for the present project, some seemed reluctant to participate because of the journal component. One participant, who had agreed to write a journal, did not find the time to do it, explaining about her extremely busy days. So the implementation of interventions at pre-departure and post-return are more likely to be feasible. The interview data from the present project indicates that de-briefing is not only feasible but also something students are willing to do and view positively. Three students who responded to my second recruiting email circulated after their return had not wanted to participate in the project originally, but once they returned, they were keen to discuss their experiences in an interview. The SA advising literature primarily concerns what can be done to intervene in student learning, but de-briefings can benefit host families as well. One host mother who was upset about not having had post-stay communication with her student spent substantial time expressing her feelings of bewilderment during the interview. She appreciated the opportunity to be interviewed and used it to organise her thoughts on this troubling topic.

To what extent do these interventions make a difference? Several studies examine how pre-departure classes and/or interventions while abroad affected outcomes by comparing students in experimental groups and control groups. In many cases, results show that the intervention group made significant quantitative gains between their pre- and post-stay "Intercultural Development Inventory" scores (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003), indicating their greater intercultural development (Cohen et al., 2005; Lou & Bosley, 2008; Paige et al., 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Vande Berg, 2009). Qualitative data further indicate that the treatment had positive effects on SA experiences (Cohen et al., 2005; Paige et al., 2004). Hence, these experimental studies collectively suggest that well-designed interventions can enhance students' experiences abroad and intercultural sensitivity development.

These studies, however, generally concern programs spanning one semester or one year. With very few studies done in this area, it is not clear whether the claimed differences that

interventions have made are equally applicable to shorter programs. According to Shaheen (2004), who investigated a two month SA program, some traces of pre-departure training effects were found in the post-stay interview data. Nevertheless, unlike students in longer programs in other studies, participants in her study did not show a quantitative gain on the post-test scores. Therefore, the different kinds of potential interventions and their effects on students' learning outcomes in short-term programs warrant further investigation.

9.3 Limitations

A limitation of this dissertation is the small sample population of students and host families who participated in the two short-term SA programs to Japan from two Australian universities. The findings cannot simply be generalised to a larger population and other intercultural settings. However, the in-depth qualitative nature of the dissertation made it possible to investigate the diversity of perceptions and opinions that would be overlooked in large-scale studies, while at the same time enabling the identification of certain commonalities. Although large scale studies have the advantage of allowing researchers to make generalisations, small scale studies such as this are beneficial for the richness of detail in real contexts (Patton, 2002).

A further limitation pertains to the methods of data collection and the quantity of data. Journal entries were collected from only five out of nine students. The students were asked to write about any events, observations and thoughts about their homestay experiences every day, or at least every few days in retrospect, but their intensive schedules prevented them from keeping regular records. Some journal entries were limited to only describing what they did on a particular day, without extending their thoughts about their intercultural experiences. The interview data was collected only through one-off individual interviews after the trip. Even though I made the conscious decision to opt for individual interviews rather than interviewing in a focus group, both formats could be combined for students in order to collect richer data. An additional interview prior to the trip would have captured pre-departure expectations that the students held at the time more accurately.

9.4 Future research

Both the limitations of the present study and the implications for interventions and advising discussed above raise questions that point to avenues for further research. The limitation suggests the need for a larger scale study to allow generalisation to a larger population. As the participants were recruited from only two programs of two Australian universities for the present thesis, the research populations can be expanded to participants in other similar short-term programs that include Japanese homestays. Based on the kinds of expectations found in the present study, pre-departure questionnaires can be designed to investigate the extent to which these expectations are held about intercultural experiences, using Likert scale questions. The questionnaires can include open-ended questions to ask about any other expectations, uncertainty or concerns that they may have. Post-stay questionnaires can be administered to find out the extent to which their various expectations were met, any difficulties that arose, and how they coped and so on. Conducting this kind of quantitative study will test whether the findings of the present thesis can be generalised, in order to improve pre-departure information and/or training for both students and host families.

In order to determine the effect of implementing certain types of interventions, experimental studies can be designed to compare control groups and experimental groups among departing students. Pre-departure information and/or training activities for cultural and intercultural learning can vary between the groups. For instance, the information given to control groups can remain similar to what students in the present thesis had received, while the experimental group can explore how the particular relational dynamics may influence their host families' possible expectations towards them. Training sessions for the experimental group can include discussion of experiences of past participants.

In these ways, quantitative and qualitative approaches can be combined (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) to examine the influence of the treatment that the experimental group received on the students' reactions to and interpretations of their intercultural experiences during homestay. Quantitative data from pre- and post- tests using questionnaires such as the Intercultural Development Inventory can be complemented with qualitative data collected through post-return reflective essays and/or interviews in order to provide a fuller exploration of the extent to which these interventions make a difference in participants' intercultural experiences.

By laying the groundwork for future studies and interventions such as those I am proposing, this thesis contributes to enhancing future intercultural experiences for short-term SA program participants. No doubt such SA programs to Japan and the homestay component will remain attractive to students learning Japanese in Australian universities, and it is important for educators to maximise the intercultural learning of the students they send abroad through continuing efforts to refine the SA advising processes and content.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Transcription conventions

The following conventions (Ten Have, 2004, pp. 183-184) was used in transcribing the recorded interviews.

Timed intervals[21]

(0.0) Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence by tenth of second. i.e. (3.0) is a pause of 3 seconds.

(.) A dot in parentheses indicates a tiny 'gap' within or between utterances.

Characteristics of speech production

Word — Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude.

:: — Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. Multiple colons indicate a more prolonged sound.

.,?? — Punctuation marks are used to indicate characteristics of speech production, especially intonation; they are not referring to grammatical units.

. — A period indicates a stopping fall in tone.

, — A comma indicates a continuing intonation, as when you are reading items from a list.

? — A question mark indicates a rising intonation.

WORD — Upper case indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.

(laugh) — This indicates laughing sounds.

[21] The time intervals were recorded in the original transcripts, but they were removed from the quotes used in finding Chapters 6, 7 and 8 as the time intervals were not analysed.

Appendix B: Interview questions guide

Student Participants

The interview is semi-structured. It plays a role as "de-briefing." Start with a general question.

1. How was your homestay experience overall?

   Likely responses: Good / Great / wonderful/ OK / It was a bit difficult to get used to, but… / Not so good

Follow up with …

2. What were the *good things* about your homestay experience?;

   Not-so-good things?

3. What do you remember most?

4. Did anything *surprising* happen when communicating with host family?
   funny (or something you laughed at)

5. (In Q4, some say "No" and some will tell some stories. Depending on the answers, adjust the following questions.)

   Can you tell me something about mealtime?
   the weekend when you went out with the family?

6. (This question is to be asked when any problematic issues are raised from Q2, 3 or 4.)
   Do you think you solved the problem?
   Or How did you solve the problem?

7. What things do you wish you should have known before you went?

8. What things did you learn about Japan, the Japanese people or Japanese culture from this homestay?

9. How did this homestay experience change your opinion on Japan, the Japanese people or Japanese culture?

10. What advice would you give to students who are going next year?

In order to clarify, elaborate and understand the content in their journals better:

- Could you tell me more about this incident?
- Why do you think he or she said (or did) that?
- How did you feel about that?
- Why do you think you felt that way?

Host families

Pre-interview Survey
This is to be asked at the beginning.

1) Have you hosted a foreign student as a homestay family before?
今までホストファミリーとして学生の受け入れをなさった事がありますか。

No. This is the first time.
いいえ。今回が初めてです。

Yes. This is _____ time.
はい。今回が_____目です。

➔ Please describe the students' nationalities:
➔ 過去にホストした留学生達の出身地について教えてください。

2) Please list all your family members. Who had most opportunities for communicating with the student?
家族構成を教えてください。留学生と特に会話する機会が多かった方は？

3) Have you and any of your family members been abroad for study or travel or had opportunities in communicating with foreigners other than the exchange student?
ご家族の中に海外旅行や留学の経験がある方、また仕事の関係等で留学生以外の外国人の方と交流する機会がある方はいらっしゃいますか。

Yes. ➔Please describe the details.
はい。➔具体的に教えてください。

No.
いいえ。

The interview is semi-structured. Start with a general question.

1. How was your experience of hosting students from Australian university?

   オーストラリアの大学からの留学生をホストファミリーとして受け入れられた経験はいかがでしたか。

   Likely responses: Good / Great / wonderful/ OK / It was a bit difficult to get used to, but… / Not so good

   よかった・素晴らしい経験・まあまあ・最初は大変なこともありましたけど。。。。・色々問題がありまして。。。

Follow up with …

2. What were the *good things* you experienced during homestay?
   Not-so-good things?

   ホームステイをして　*よかったと思うこと*はどんな事ですか。
   あまりよくなかったと思うこと

3. What do you remember most?
   今回のホームステイ中に一番印象に残っていることは？

4. Did anything *surprising* happen when communicating with the student?

   留学生とのコミュニケーションの中で何か*びっくりされたこと*はありましたか。
   Unexpected
   予想外の出来事
   Funny (or something you laughed at)
   おかしかった出来事（笑ってしまった事）

5. How did this homestay experience change your opinion on Australia, Australian people or culture? (Indonesia, Malaysia)

   ホームステイの経験を通して、オーストラリアやオーストラリア人、また文化に対する意見（見方？）がどのように変わりましたか。（インドネシア、マレーシア）

6. What things did students not know about (Japan/Japanese culture/customs)?

   日本や日本人、日本の習慣や文化について留学生が知らなかったことにどんな事があったでしょうか。

7. What things did you learn about (Australia/Australian culture/customs)?
   Indonesia
   Malaysia

   オーストラリアやオーストラリア人、オーストラリアの習慣や文化について
   ～さんが知らなかったことにどんな事があったでしょうか。（インドネシア、マレーシア）

8. Were there things that you felt a student should have studied or they should have been taught?

   何か、学生が来る前に勉強しておくべきだった、又は、学生に教えておくべきだと思ったことはありますか。

Appendix C: List of university websites examined in Chapter 4

A: Adelaide Abroad. (2012). Retrieved 25 February 2012 from http://www.adelaide.edu.au/student/study_abroad/

B: ANU student Mobility program. (2011). Retrieved 24 February 2012 from http://info.anu.edu.au/studyat/International_Office/Exchange/Outgoingindex

C: Exchange for Curtin students. (2010). Retrieved 27 February 2012 from http://studyabroad.curtin.edu.au/exchange-for-curtin-students/experience-exchange.html

D: Exchanges for University of Sydney students. (2011). Retrieved 25 February 2012 from http://sydney.edu.au/future_students/study_abroad/

E: Monash international exchange program. (2011). Retrieved 25 February 2012 from http://monash.edu/students/studyabroad/programs/exchange.html

F: Outbound students the University of Melbourne. (2011). Retrieved 25 February 2012 from http://www.mobility.unimelb.edu.au/outbound/index.html

G: QUT Student exchange. (2011). Retrieved 24 February 2012 from http://www.student.qut.edu.au/studying/student-exchange/why-go-on-exchange

H: RMIT University Outbound students. (2012).Retrieved 27 February 2012 from http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=nawg3036638e1

I: Student exchange for current UWA students. (2011). Retrieved 25 February 2012 from http://www.studyat.uwa.edu.au/study-abroad-and-exchange/study-overseas

J: The University of New South Wales outbound opportunities. (n.d.) Retrieved 24 February 2012 from http://www.international.unsw.edu.au/outbound-opportunities/opportunities-unsw-students-overseas/#

K: UniSA student exchange program. (2011). Retrieved 27 February 2012 from http://www.unisa.edu.au/exchange/default.asp

L: UQ Abroad. (2011). Retrieved 24 February 2012 from http://www.uq.edu.au/uqabroad/

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